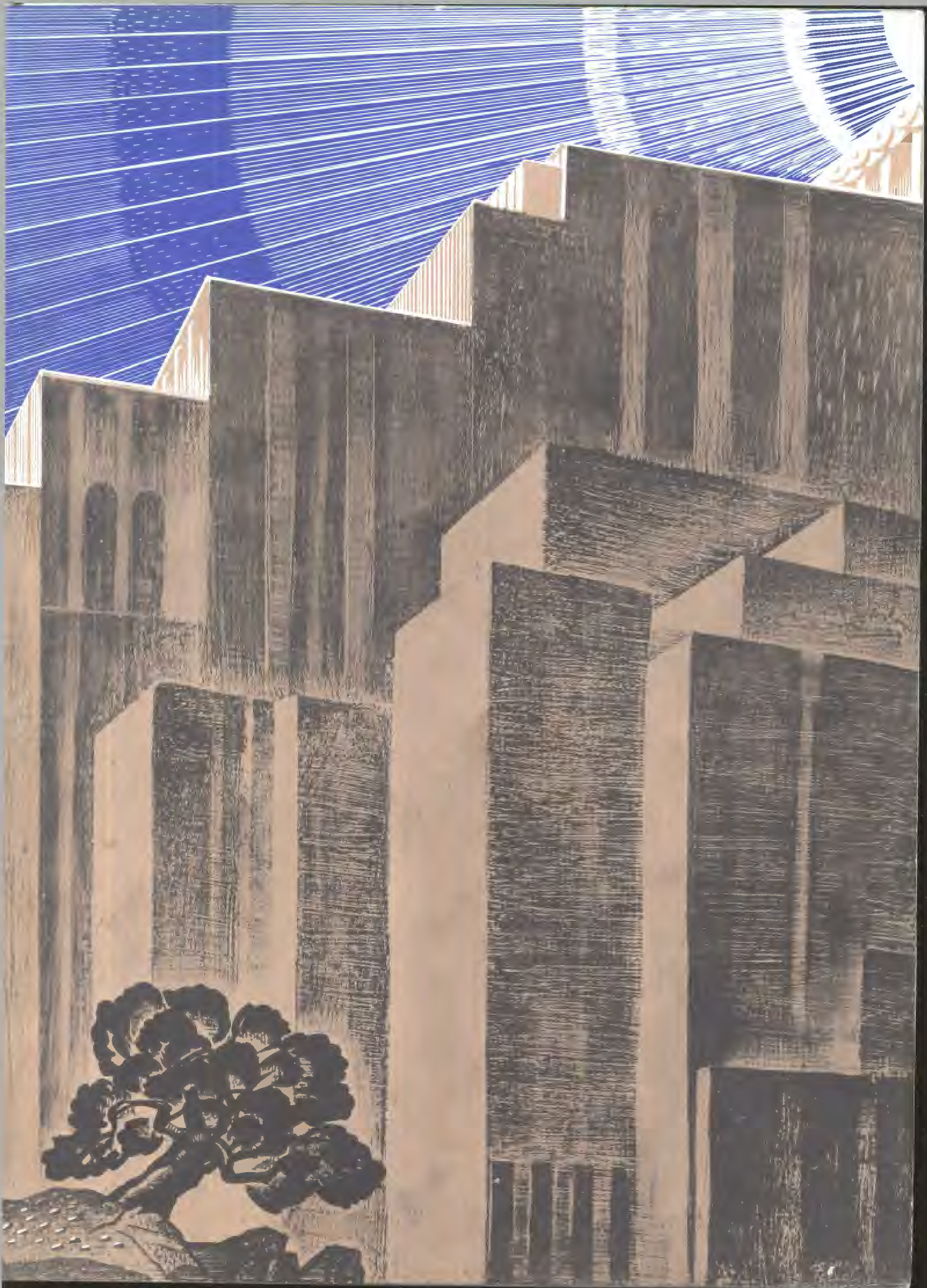
# PARTNER



# PARTNERS

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## A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WYOMISSING INDUSTRIES

**PUBLISHED BY**

THE WYOMISSING INDUSTRIES

READING, PENNSYLVANIA

COPYRIGHT **1936** TEXTILE MACHINE WORKS
NARROW FABRIC COMPANY
BERKSHIRE KNITTING MILLS

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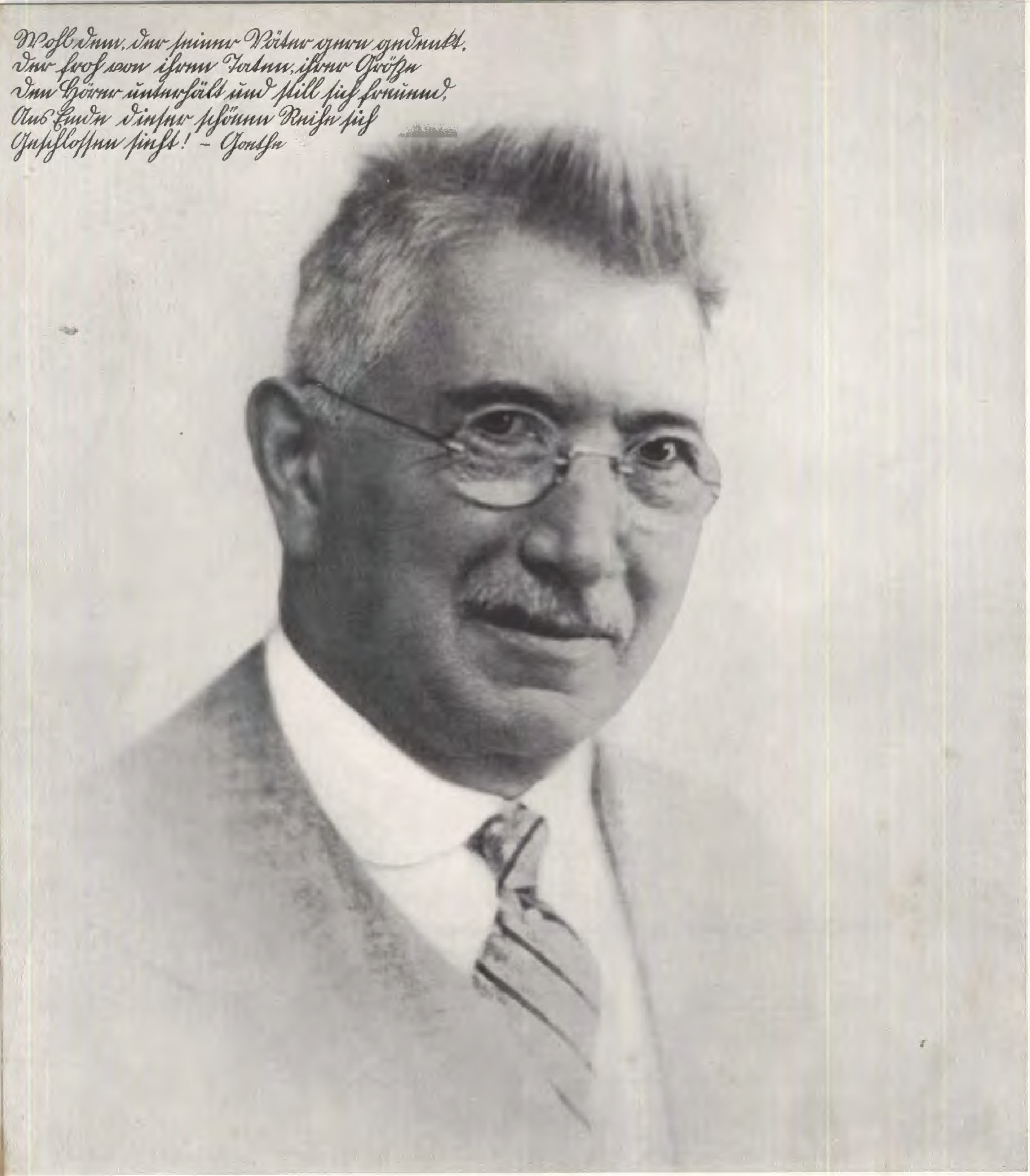
THIS BOOK was prepared by a committee of employees of the Wyomissing Industries in honor of

**FERDINAND THUN and HENRY JANSSEN**

on the occasion of their seventieth birthdays, February, 1936

Wohl dem, der ſeiner Väter gern gedenkt,
Der froh von ihren Taten, ihrer Größe
Den Hörer unterhält und ſtill ſich freuend,
Ans Ende dieſer ſchönen Reihe ſich
Geſchloſſen ſieht! – Goethe



**FERDINAND THUN** Born in Barmen, Germany, February 14, 1866, son of Ferdinand and Julia Westkott Thun. Came to the United States in 1886, naturalized citizen in 1892. Married Anna N. Grebe of Stony Creek Mills, Pennsylvania, May 20, 1896.

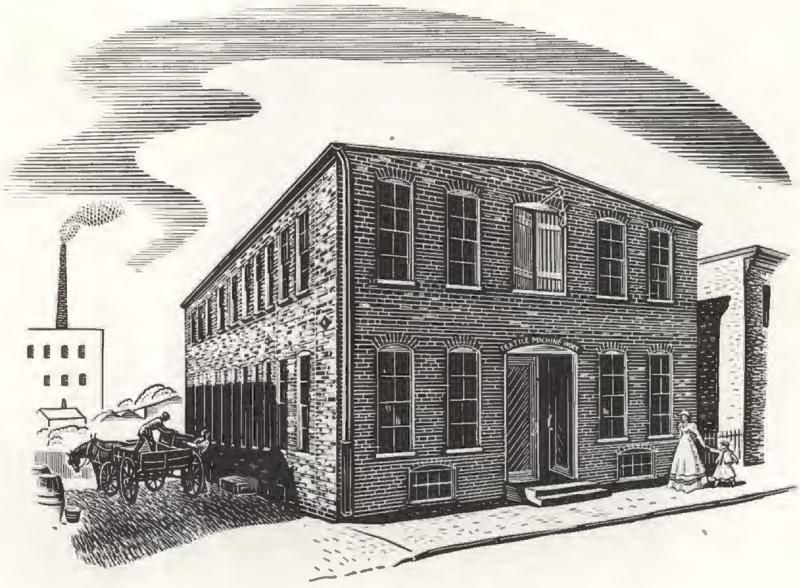
Wir müſſen alle ſchlechte Arbeit
haſſen lernen wie die Sünde.
- Goethe

**HENRY JANSSEN**

orn in Barmen, Germany, February 8, 1866, son of Wilhelm Albert nd Anna Elisabeth Benner Janssen. Came to the United States in 888, naturalized citizen 1894. Married Wilhelmina Raeker of Lipp-pringe, Germany, September 25, 1890.

The birthplace of
Ferdinand Thun

The birthplace of Henry Janssen



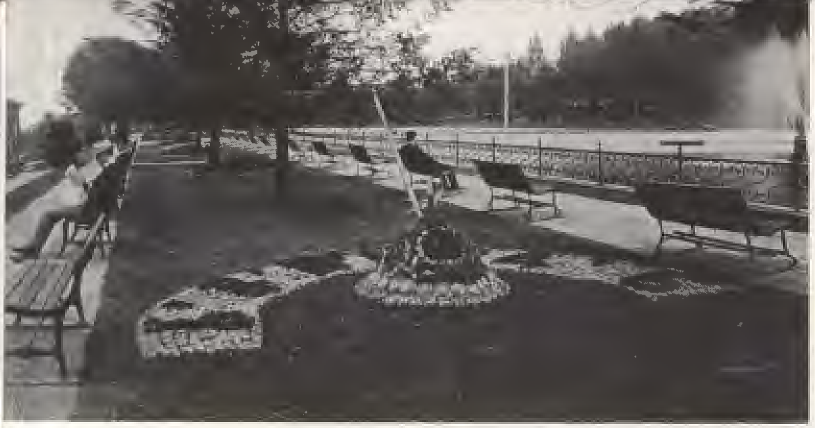
# CHAPTER I

## THE START

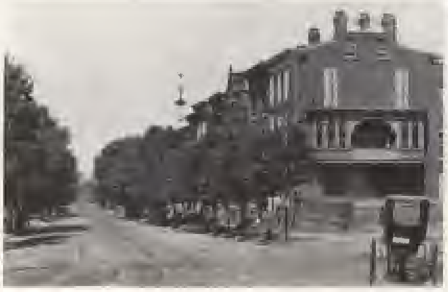
The Schuylkill Valley in Berks County, Pennsylvania, bears a marked resemblance to the vine-clad hills of the Rhine. Seeking it out as a transplanted bit of the Fatherland, industrious Germans brought to it many of their old customs and occupations.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, some of their small industrial concerns began to feel the influence of mechanization, and many new industries appeared to challenge the supremacy of the time-honored mining and metal-working operations which hitherto had formed the major occupations in this section. Included among the new activities were the beginnings of a textile trade; new firms engaged in braiding and knitting work.

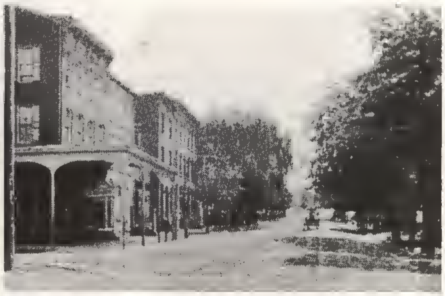
Seeing in these things a need for good machine building, two young Germans made careful plans that matured early in 1892, when they turned con-



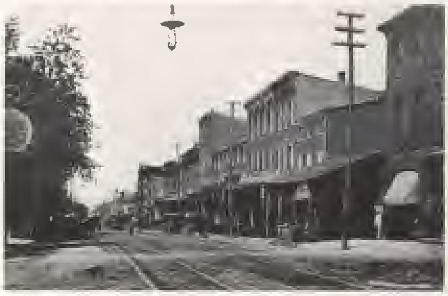
City Park, Reading, in 1892. The sun dial, of green and red plants, was a familiar landmark



Penn Street—west from Eleventh Street



Penn Street—east from Tenth Street



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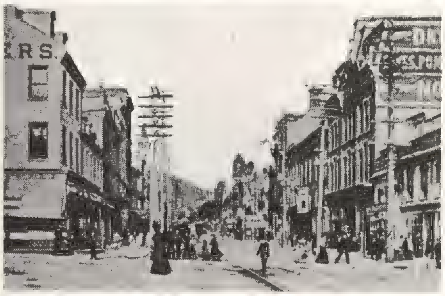
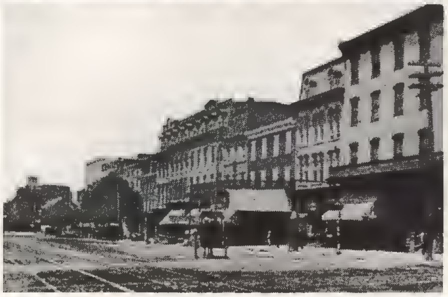
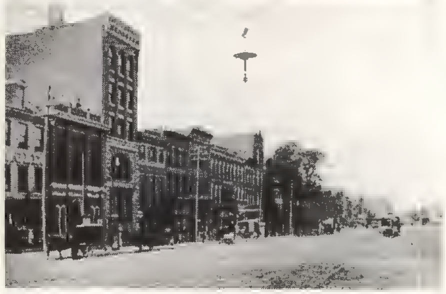


Penn Street—east from Sixth Street



Penn Street—west from Sixth Street



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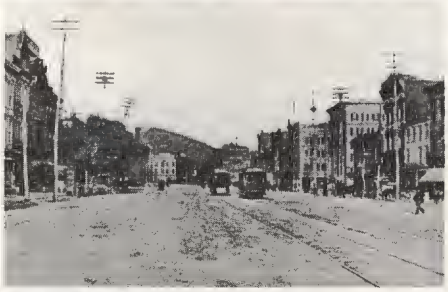
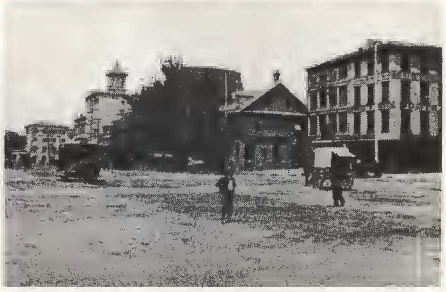
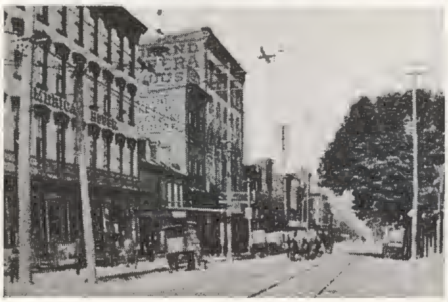


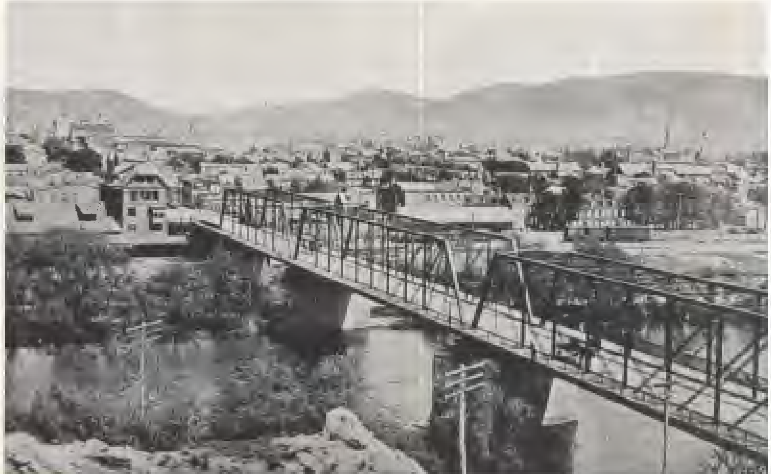
Penn Street—east from Fourth Street



Penn Street—at Fifth Street



Penn Street—west from Fourth Street



The Penn Street Bridge in 1892

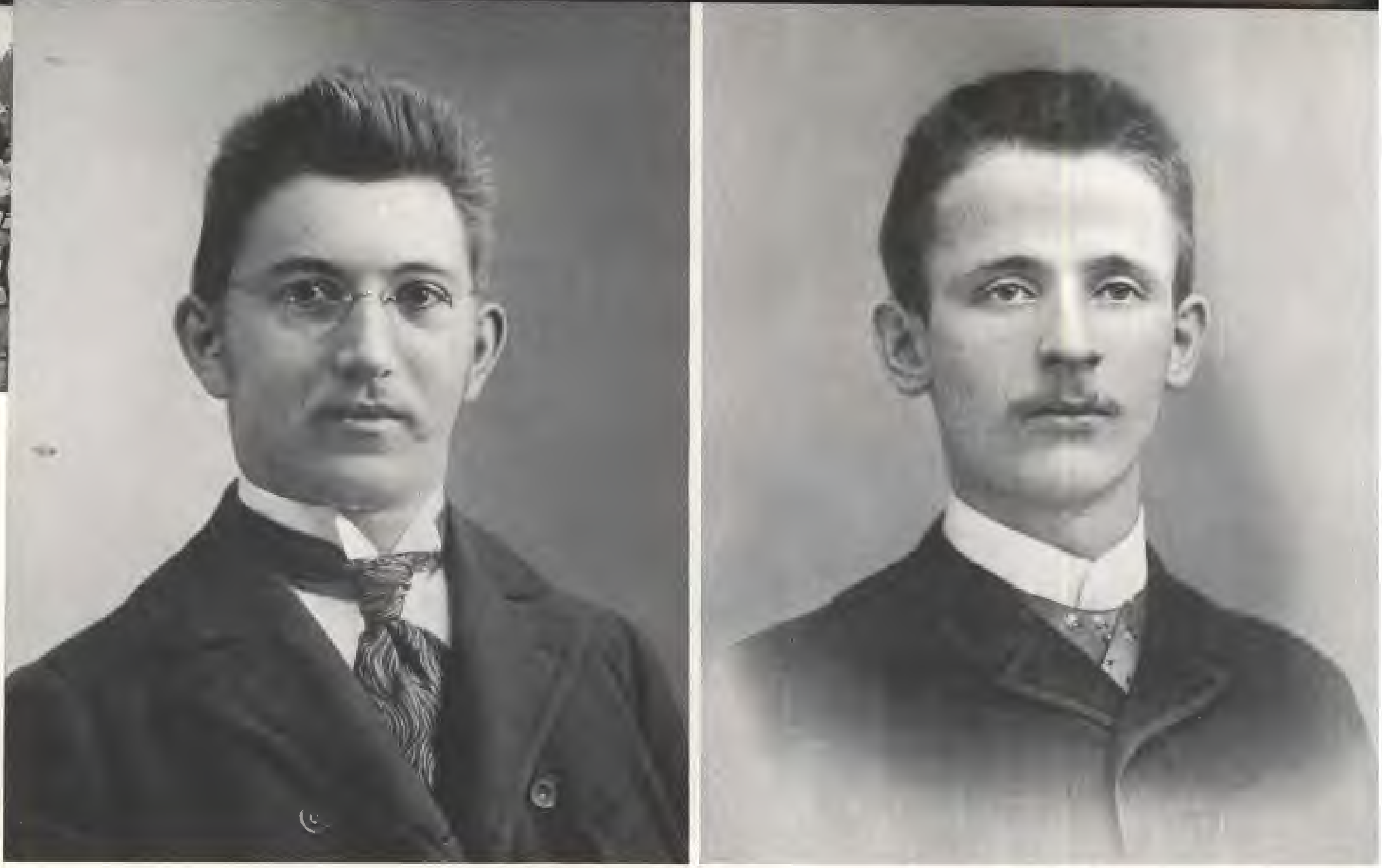
fidently toward the city of Reading to establish themselves in a machine shop business. Their association was mutually advantageous.

One of the two—Ferdinand Thun—having worked from 1886 to 1888 as a bookkeeper for Louis Kraemer and Company in Stony Creek Mills, was well acquainted with the locality. He had returned to his native city of Barmen, in Germany, remaining there a year, to acquire experience in the manufacture of braiding machines. Arranging then for a position in a New York braiding plant, he came to America a second time in 1889.

Only five months previously Henry Janssen, another German boy, had finished his technical education and had come to America. The day after his arrival he had secured a position in a braiding plant and soon had risen to the position of foreman.

A mutual friend, Max Mittendorf, felt that these two young sons of his own home town of Barmen who had crossed the seas to begin their separate careers in a new world should know each other, and he arranged a meeting. They soon discovered that they were born within the same week and that they shared a determination to go into business. They seemed to have acquired braiding experience from different viewpoints, and possessed personal qualifications that appeared to be complementary.

Within a short time they were fast friends. They exchanged views and found a unity of purpose that led them to merge their interests. Their plan was



The two partners, Ferdinand Thun and Henry Janssen, about 1892

830 Washington Street, Thun's early residence

220 North Eleventh Street, Janssens' early residence

as daring as it was ambitious: they had decided to make braiding machinery in competition with the well-known German manufacturers.

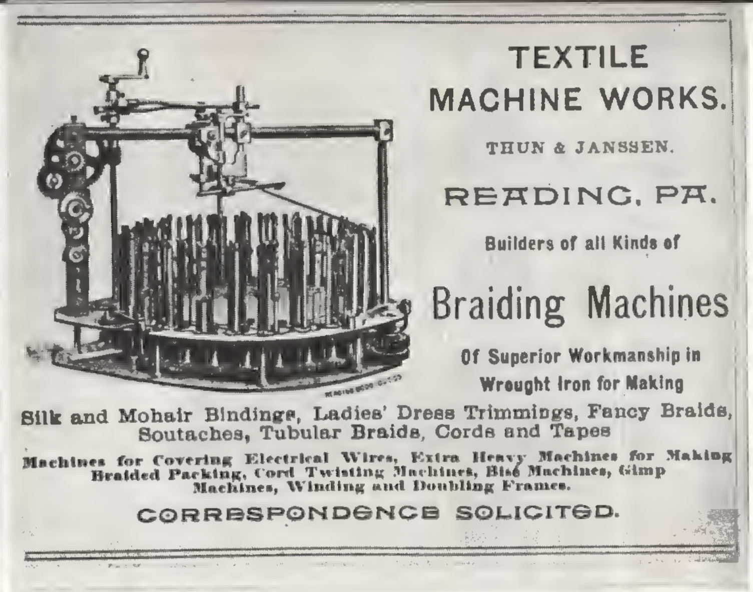
As to the market there could be no question, particularly after a high protective tariff, imposed in 1890, had placed a heavy handicap on imported machinery. Could local enterprise prove its ability and capture the business? It was worth trying. A suitable brick building, at 222 Cedar Street, Reading, was rented for a modest $40.00 per month. Equipment was installed and it is not surprising that the supplies included small machine parts from Barmen, Germany. With the firm name of Thun & Janssen there appeared a descriptive subtitle that allowed the young partners wide latitude; it read: "Textile Machine Works." On July 5, 1892, the door was opened.

The response was at first decidedly cool. Braid manufacturers were frankly skeptical. Why favor an unknown quantity over the traditional German manufacturers' names?

Repair jobs, however, were more promising. During the first six months this branch of the business brought sufficient income to take care of the payroll. At least, the youthful employers were not embarrassed by labor troubles. Quite possibly the loyal help of their workmen at this critical time was the beginning of a tradition. An enviable peacefulness has always characterized the relationship between these two men and their employees; there has been mutual confidence and good will.

Courtesy Ford Motor Co.

The young inventor, Henry Ford, with his first car



TEXTILE
MACHINE WORKS.
THUN & JANSSEN.
READING, PA.
Builders of all Kinds of
Braiding Machines
Of Superior Workmanship in
Wrought Iron for Making
Silk and Mohair Bindings, Ladies' Dress Trimmings, Fancy Braids, Soutaches, Tubular Braids, Cords and Tapes
Machines for Covering Electrical Wires, Extra Heavy Machines for Making Braided Packing, Cord Twisting Machines, Bias Machines, Gimp Machines, Winding and Doubling Frames.
CORRESPONDENCE SOLICITED.

This advertisement appeared in May, 1893

Brown Bros.

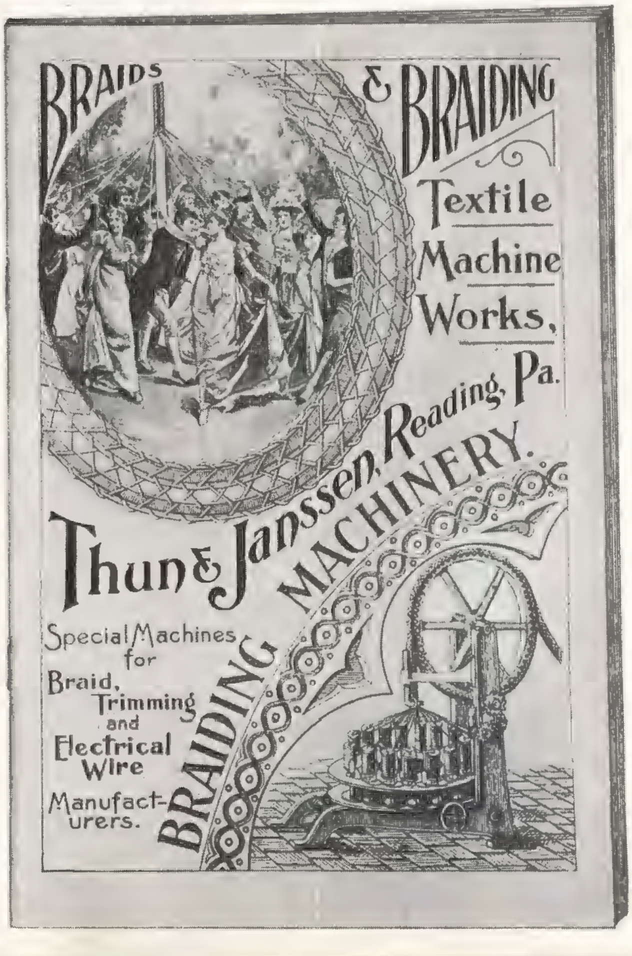
Braid made a surprising difference

Levick

In the Nineties a strange game was imported from Scotland

Brown Bros.

At the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, brush braid was much in use



BRAIDS & BRAIDING
Textile
Machine
Works,
Thun & Janssen, Reading, Pa.
BRAIDING MACHINERY.
Special Machines
for
Braid,
Trimming
and
Electrical
Wire
Manufacturers.

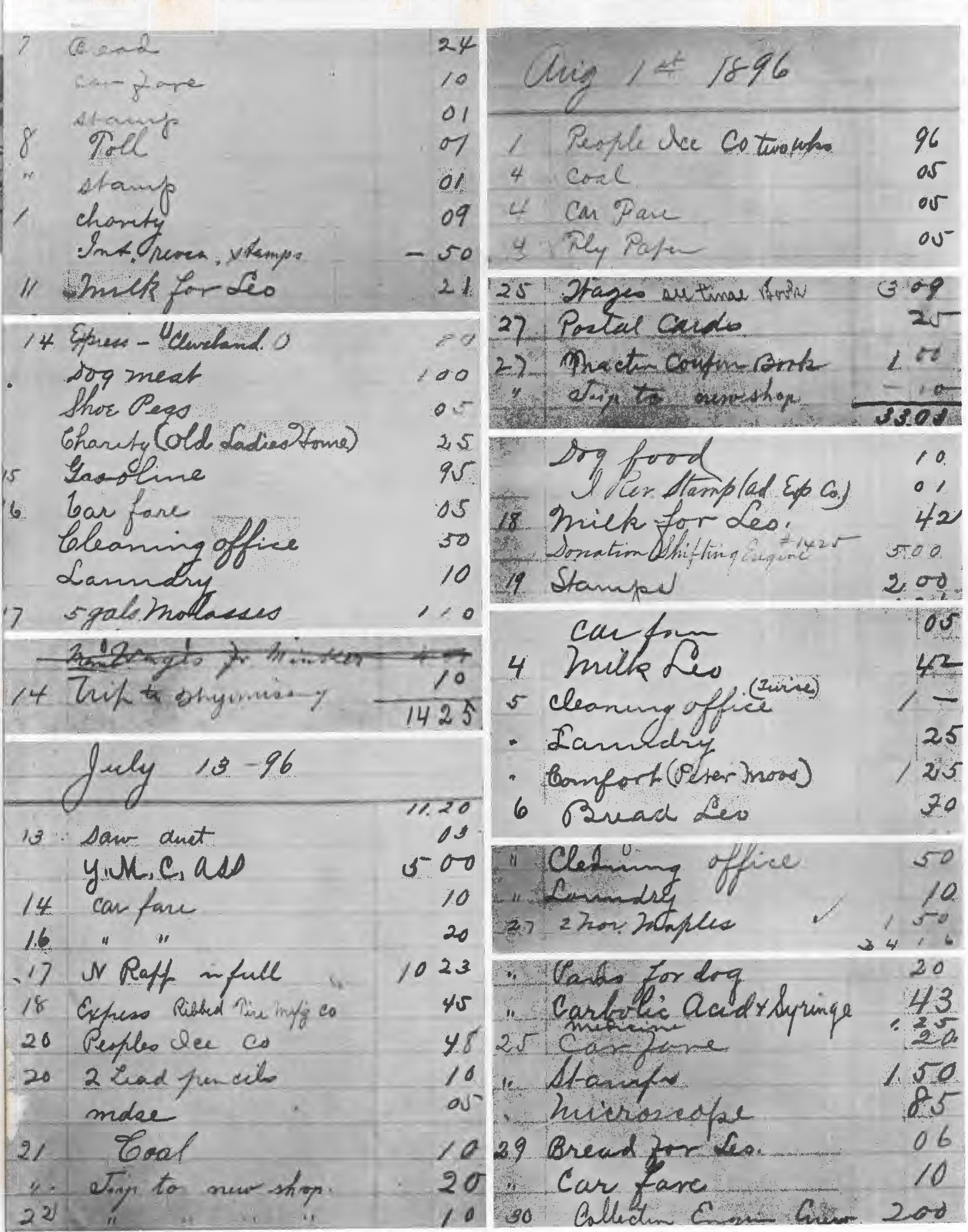
The 1900 Catalog displayed a gay cover

It is probable that the young proprietors had little time to watch the torchlight parades that enlivened the bitter Presidential contest between Cleveland and Harrison. Good news broke on November 5, 1892; on that date their first order for a braiding machine came in. This, with a somewhat larger order that followed shortly, offered much needed encouragement none too soon. The panic days of 1893 were just ahead.

"Hard times" afflicted all business enterprise for several years, and yet the spirit of the Gay Nineties was much in evidence. In 1893 an optimistic young mechanic named Henry Ford pushed his first car out of a tiny shop, proved that it would run (though it limped home on the power from one cylinder), and started in business in earnest. The same year saw the opening of the pretentious World's Fair, which attracted millions of visitors to Chicago. The popularity of the bicycle continued to increase, and even a few "horseless carriages" made their uncertain way along dirt roads and city cobblestones. People seemed to be looking forward to better times.

The "day book" of Thun and Janssen reflects both the fears and the spirit of that period. It is evidence of a real struggle, with emphasis on the economies, but it shows also that whatever was needed was purchased. Even then contributions to charity were recorded, and there were instances of expenditures for plant improvements of permanent character.

In the lean second year of its existence, the machine shop held its own,



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | Bread | 24 |
| | car fare | 10 |
| | stamp | 01 |
| 8 | Toll | 07 |
| " | stamp | 01 |
| 1 | charity | 09 |
| | Int. Revenue stamps | — 50 |
| 11 | Milk for Leo | 21 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | Express — Cleveland. O | 80 |
| | Dog meat | 1 00 |
| | Shoe Pegs | 05 |
| | Charity (Old Ladies Home) | 25 |
| 15 | Gasoline | 95 |
| 16 | Car fare | 05 |
| | Cleaning office | 50 |
| | Laundry | 10 |
| 17 | 5 gals Molasses | 1 10 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | ~~[illegible]~~ | ~~[illegible]~~ |
| 14 | Trip to Gymnasium | 10 |
| | | 14 25 |

July 13 - 96

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 11.20 |
| 13 | Saw dust | 03 |
| | Y.M.C.Ass | 5 00 |
| 14 | car fare | 10 |
| 16 | " " | 20 |
| 17 | N Raff in full | 10 23 |
| 18 | Express Ribbed Tire Mfg Co | 45 |
| 20 | Peoples Ice Co | 48 |
| 20 | 2 Lead pencils | 10 |
| | mdse | 05 |
| 21 | Coal | 10 |
| " | Trip to new shop | 20 |
| 22 | " " " " | 10 |

Aug 1st 1896

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | People Ice Co two wks | 96 |
| 4 | Coal | 05 |
| 4 | Car Fare | 05 |
| 4 | Fly Paper | 05 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 25 | Wages all time [illegible] | 3 09 |
| 27 | Postal Cards | 25 |
| 27 | Practice Coupon Book | 1 00 |
| " | Trip to new shop | 10 |
| | | 33 03 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Dog food | 10 |
| | 1 Rev. Stamp (ad Exp Co.) | 01 |
| 18 | Milk for Leo. | 42 |
| | Donation Shifting Engine #1425 | 5 00 |
| 19 | Stamps | 2 00 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Car fare | 05 |
| 4 | Milk Leo | 42 |
| 5 | Cleaning office (twice) | 1 — |
| " | Laundry | 25 |
| " | Comfort (Peter Moos) | 1 25 |
| 6 | Bread Leo | 70 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| " | Cleaning office | 50 |
| " | Laundry | 10 |
| 27 | 2 Nov. Maples ✓ | 1 50 |
| | | 34 16 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| " | Cards for dog | 20 |
| " | Carbolic Acid & Syringe | 43 |
| | medicine | 25 |
| 25 | Car fare | 20 |
| " | Stamps | 1 50 |
| " | Microscope | 85 |
| 29 | Bread for Leo | 06 |
| " | Car fare | 10 |
| 30 | Collection Engine Crew | 2 00 |

Items from the "Day Book"

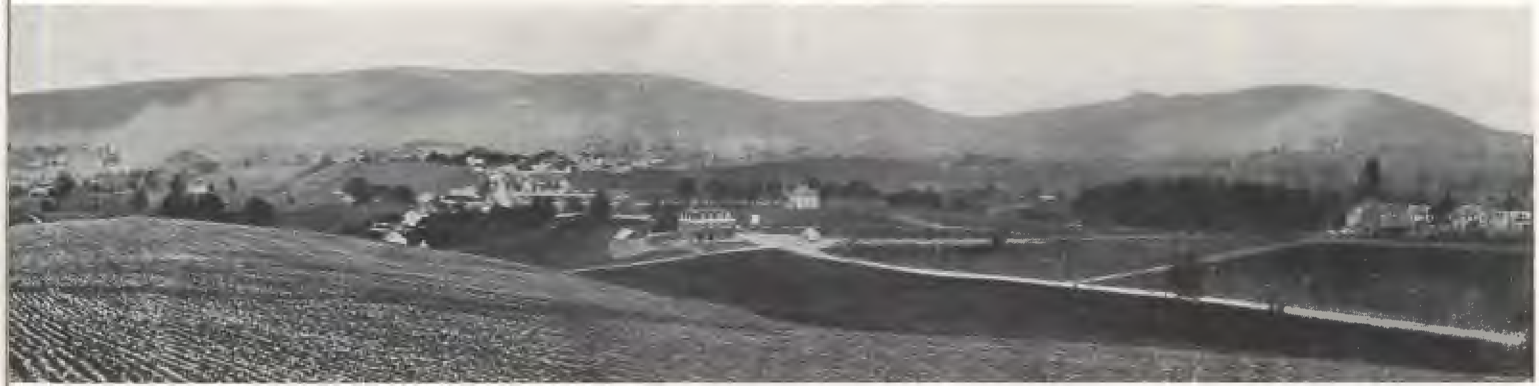
and specialties were developed. First a machine for braiding wrapping cord, then one for making the ends of suspenders. There were also small items that brought in repeat orders, and helped to build up volume and carry overhead.

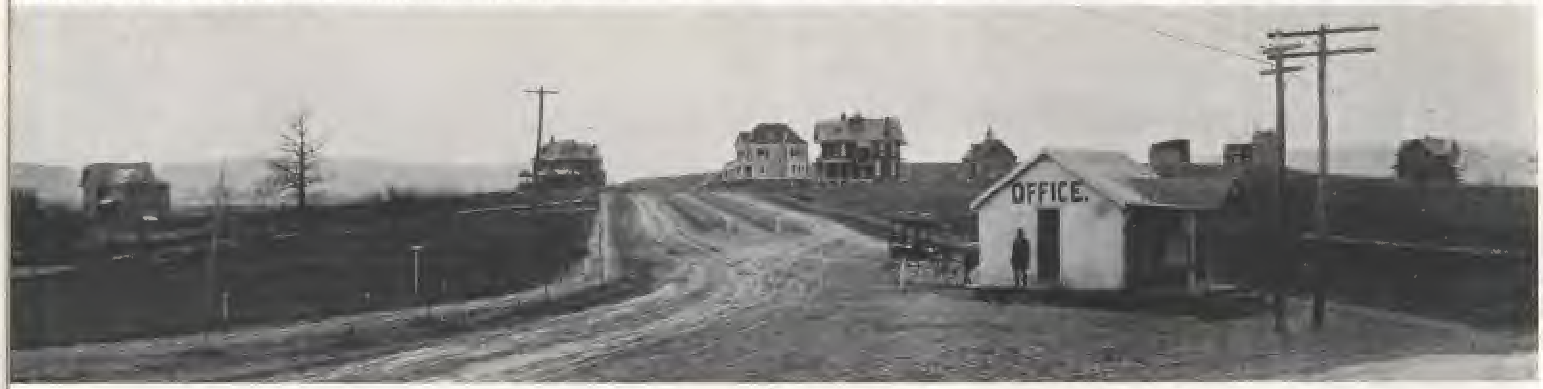
In spite of these little encouragements, the times and general business conditions would have justified misgivings, but if there were any they were concealed. Probably each partner fortified himself by noting the loyal perseverance of the other. There was no faltering.

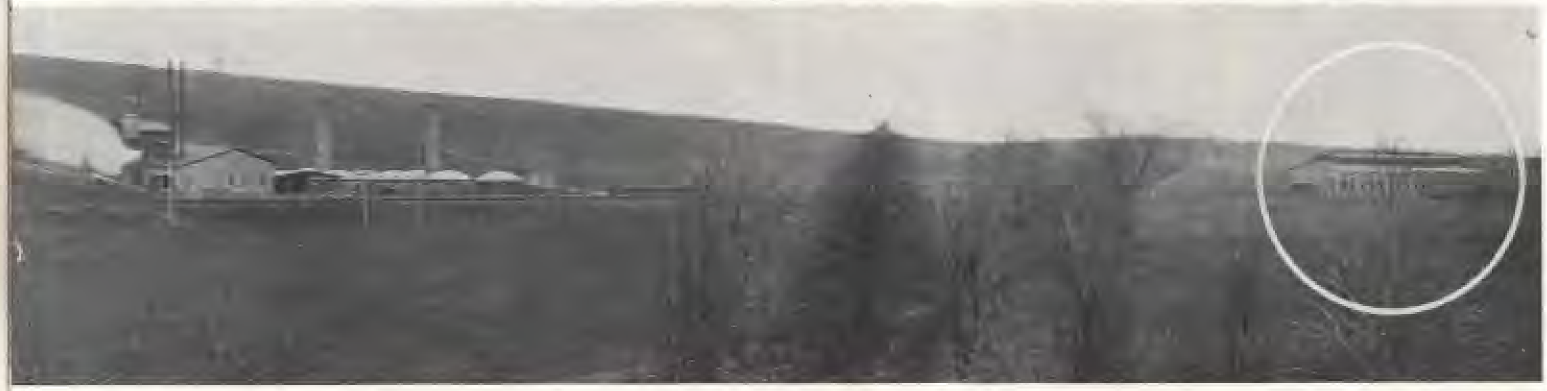
Brown Bros.

Chilkoot Pass barred the way to fortune; few prospectors found enough gold to pay their expenses

Wyomissing in the same year (1897) offered no glittering promises of fabulous wealth. Rather it seemed to serve the purpose of those who needed ample room for much hard work. The machine shop (in the circle below) was the first Textile Machine Works building. Ploughed fields yielded slowly to the buildings and streets of Wyomissing.







# CHAPTER 2

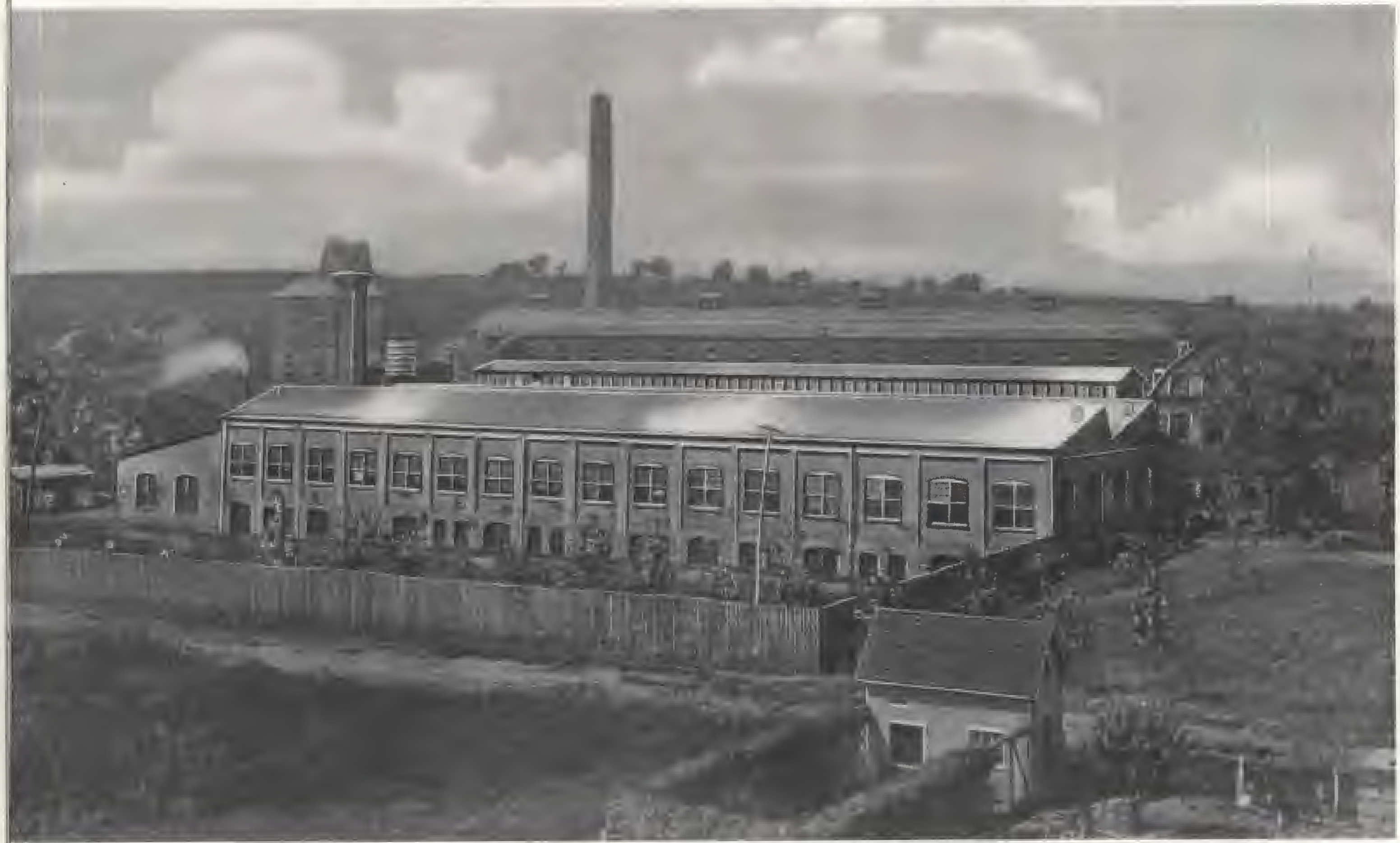
## THE MOVE TO WYOMISSING

The tension eased somewhat in the third year of the machine shop's existence. Orders began to come in with more frequency and regularity. Workmen were in each other's way. Late in 1895 the Company received its first really big order for braiding machines.

The partners were alert. They could see, from the increased activity, that there would soon be need for an enlarged plant. Perhaps even then they saw some of the possibilities of a distant future, for their search for a location led them away from the city to the open fields west of Reading, where expansion could be practically unlimited.

"Trip to Wyomissing" began to appear in the "day book," and then the pleasing variation, "Trip to new plant." While the whole country was becoming excited about the Klondike, these two prospectors undertook a different

The partners had their office on the first floor of the original office building



By 1900 the first shop of the Textile Machine Works had doubled in size

The first stable was built in 1900

sort of venture. Though less spectacular than the Chilkoot Pass, Wyomissing promised no lack of thrills.

So out the Berks and Dauphin Pike they went, out beyond the West Reading Hotel, past the toll gate and the little red schoolhouse, across the open field to a site along the railroad tracks. There they built their shop and a plain, neat office. There, with the aid of a handful of employees, they moved their machinery in September, 1896. Ample space for every machine, every operation, every employee, was provided. Apparently the problem of space had been solved. How soon that question was to come up again! Already there were signs of returning prosperity. Candidate McKinley was talking about it to offset the famous "16 to 1" slogan of Bryan's first Presidential campaign. Prosperity! Thun and Janssen were ready for it.

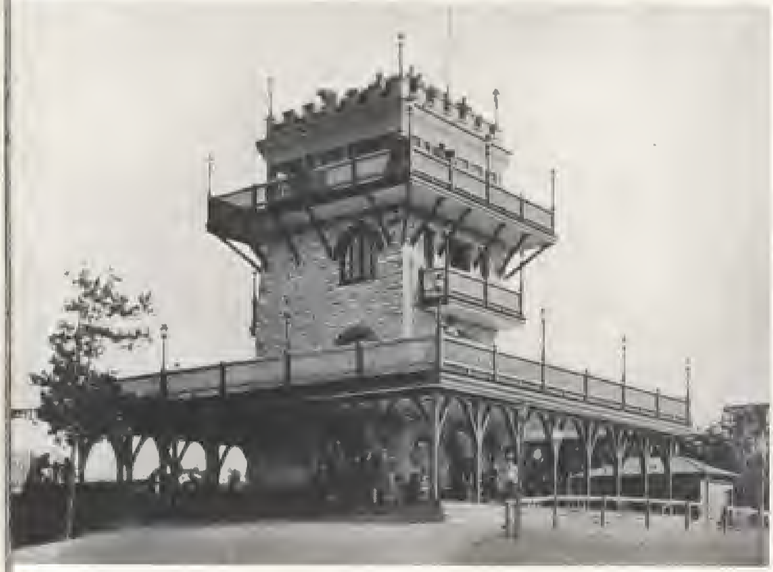
The four years of the McKinley administration followed. Though the tariff act of 1890, carrying his name, was supplanted in 1894 by the Democratic Wilson Bill, only a few items were affected; in 1897 the Dingley Bill virtually reinstated the tariffs of 1890, and business took full advantage of this encouragement. The "Textile Machine Works," as the Company was now familiarly known, swung into a good stride and moved forward rapidly.

There are anecdotes of Mr. Thun figuring machine designs from samples of braid, and of Mr. Janssen keeping figures on a slate and knowing, when a machine was finished, just what it had cost. In spite of this painstaking detail,

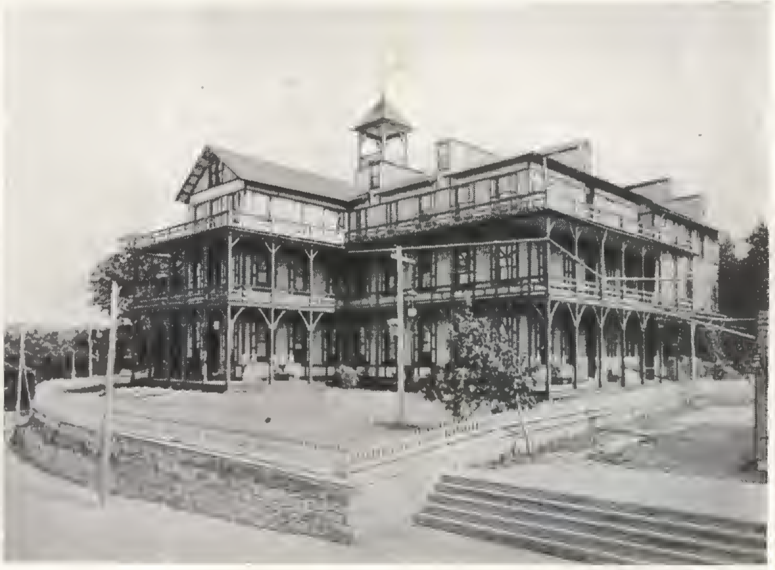
Acme

In 1898, the battleship "Maine" became the cause of a war

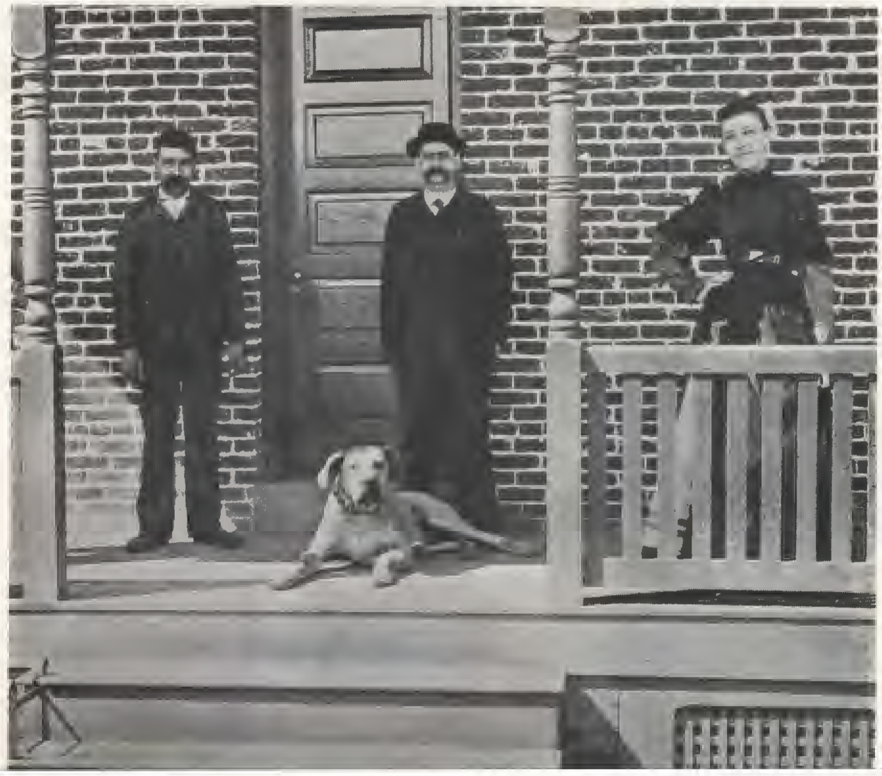
Watchman Leo seemed quite mild-mannered by day; his duties began at nightfall



The Tower on Mount Penn was a landmark



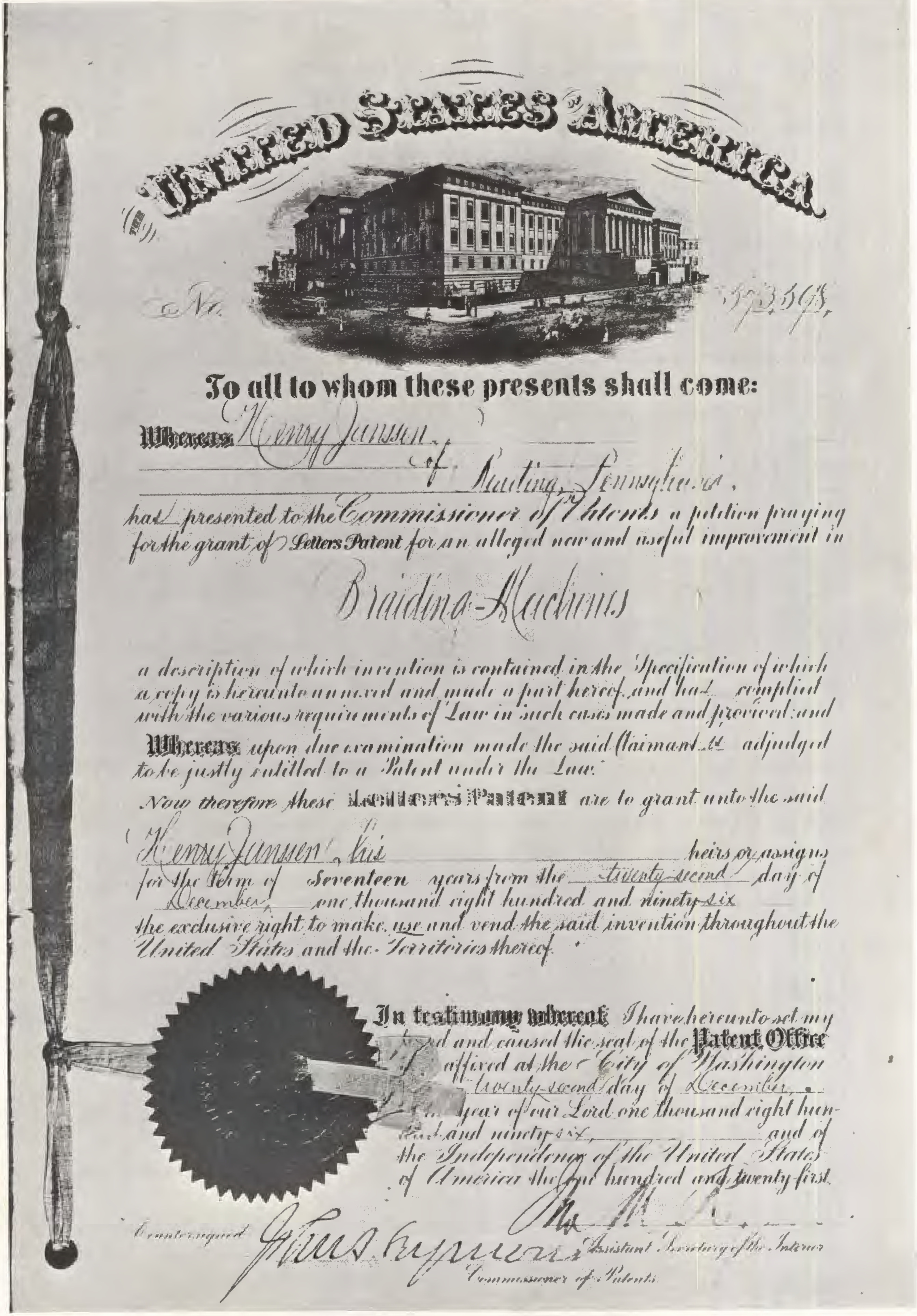
Highland House on Neversink Mountain, opened July 1892



Henry Lorah, Harry Riegel, and Sallie Garrett, with Leo. Sallie was the first woman employee however, there was time for several matters not strictly concerned with the construction of machines, instances of principles that have never been forgotten. There was employee Peter Moos, sleeping on the second floor over the office, as a sort of watchman in addition to his other duties. Was he warm and snug? So the "day book" shows "Comfort for Peter Moos." Even then the place must have the benefit of shade and attractiveness: trees were purchased. Contributions to charity continued. And Leo, the solemn mastiff who served as watchman in the shop, might well have been on the payroll for the regularity with which his name appeared in the "day book."

Meanwhile, receiving little encouragement from the established braid manufacturers, Thun and Janssen had naturally sought orders from newly established houses, and had lent them assistance and advice. These were now getting a good foothold and growing enough to need more machines. Their new orders made the outlook decidedly better.

Among records that throw light on the early days are the first patent papers, covering features of a braiding machine, granted December 22, 1896. The firm also made a number of small items during this period. There was a little knife sharpener for a local hardware merchant, and then, as the Spanish-American War turned the minds of the people toward things military, there was a cartridge-shaped cigar cutter that became a popular seller. But though every village rang with the slogan "Remember the Maine," and the triumphant



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 573598,

**To all to whom these presents shall come:**

**Whereas** Henry Janssen of Reading, Pennsylvania, has presented to the Commissioner of Patents a petition praying for the grant of **Letters Patent** for an alleged new and useful improvement in

Braiding-Machines

a description of which invention is contained in the Specification of which a copy is hereunto annexed and made a part hereof, and has complied with the various requirements of Law in such cases made and provided: and

**Whereas** upon due examination made the said Claimant is adjudged to be justly entitled to a Patent under the Law.

Now therefore these **Letters Patent** are to grant unto the said Henry Janssen, his heirs or assigns for the term of Seventeen years from the twenty-second day of December, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six the exclusive right to make, use and vend the said invention throughout the United States and the Territories thereof.

**In testimony whereof** I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the **Patent Office** affixed at the City of Washington twenty-second day of December, year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and twenty-first.

Assistant Secretary of the Interior

Countersigned

Commissioner of Patents.

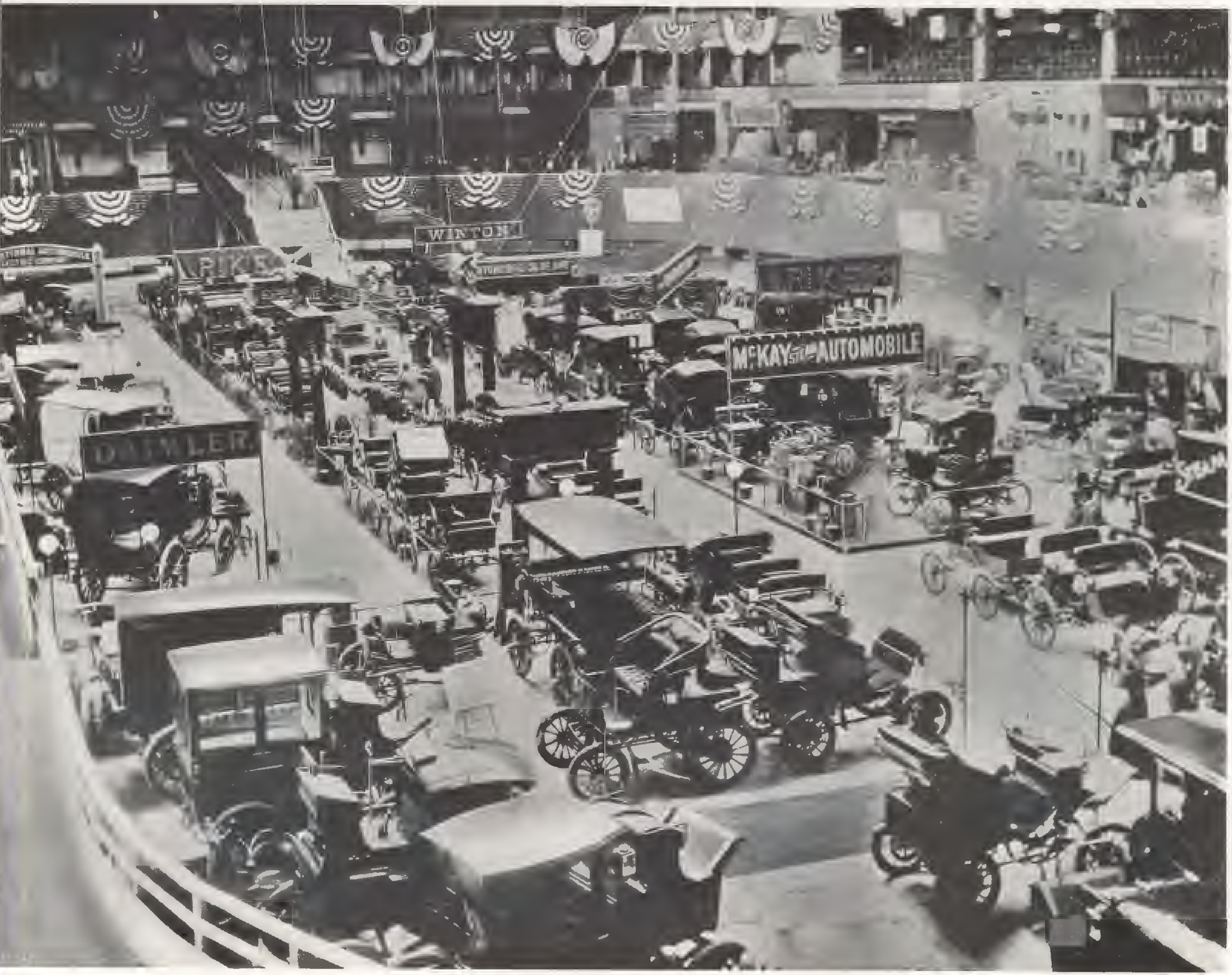
Patents on "Reading" products date back to 1896

Dewey and the popular "Teddy" Roosevelt returned to the exciting strains of "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," business saw no let-up.

It was an eventful day in 1899 when the Textile Machine Works received the highest award at the National Export Exhibition in Philadelphia. There was further encouragement in new industrial markets. Rapid increase in the use of electricity necessitated covered wire and cable. That meant braiding.

There was, too, experimental work on another kind of machine that seemed to be a possibility for American manufacture, and one day at the beginning of the new century there stood assembled in the shop the first practical "full-fashioned machine" built on this side of the Atlantic. Full-fashioned knitted hosiery was not yet in very wide use, but influences were at work that were destined to have far-reaching effects on woman's freedom of action and on her apparel. Hosiery had not yet become important; it simply was not seen. America's first successful full-fashioned knitting machine was in good time and it had good features. Well might Europe look to her laurels.

Despite the murmurings against long dragging skirts, they held full sway. The edges were protected from wear by skirt bindings, plain ones and brush bindings with an edging of wool fibers, that were used in great quantities. The Textile Machine Works developed a method of making the brush binding on a braiding machine, with the fibers enmeshed in the braid. And then Fate stepped in, in the person of Mr. Harry Feder who became interested in the new



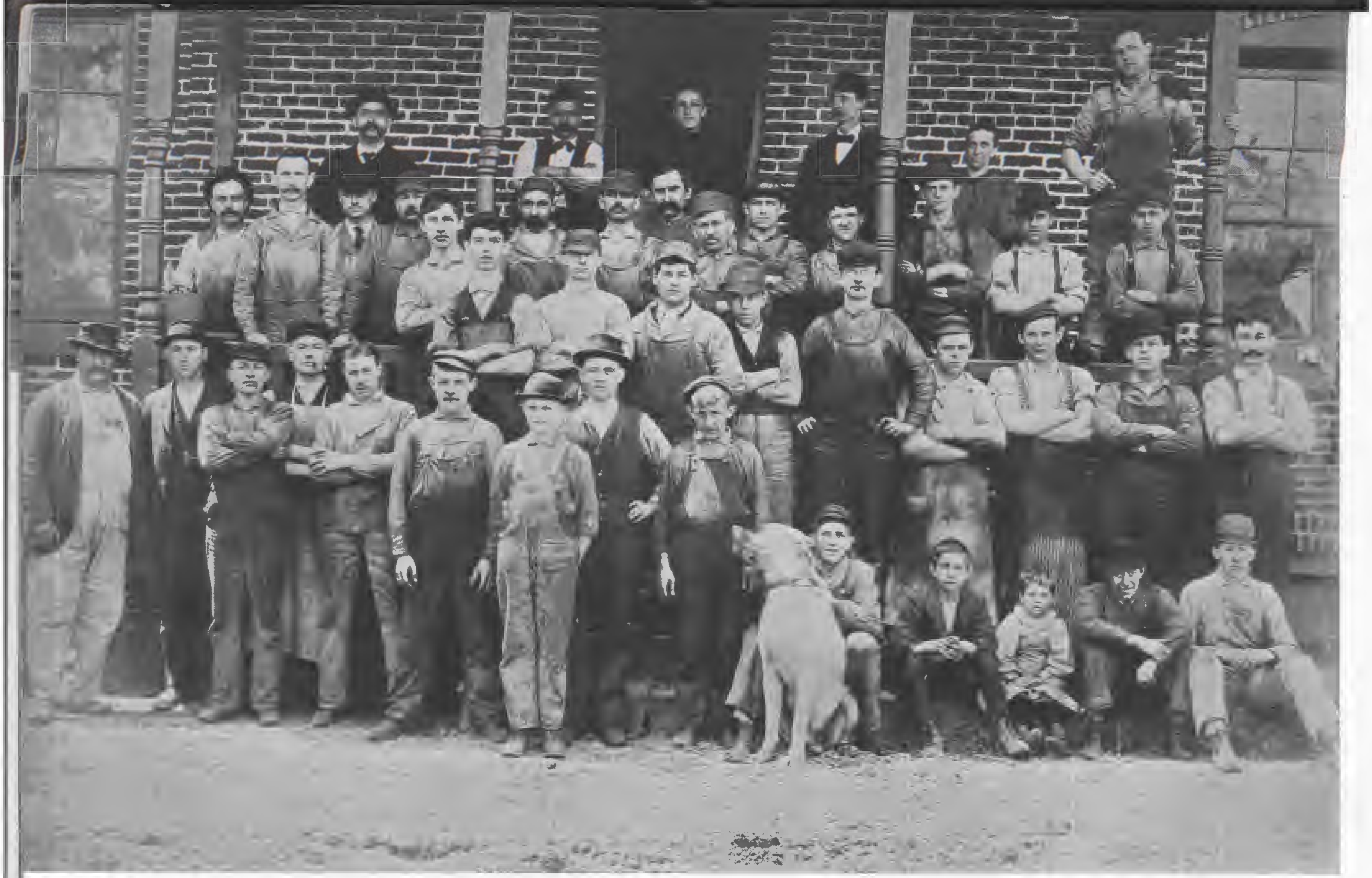
Brown Bros.

The first automobile show, in 1900, featured steam cars, quite a few electrics and several gasoline-propelled machines process. His activities consisted of originating and promoting ideas through a firm of New York distributors. That concern handled the output of a Rochester manufacturer, whom Mr. Feder tried to persuade to install braiding machines. Failing in that, he proposed that the Textile Machine Works supply him with braid, made in their own plant. With Opportunity calling, and with Barmen tradition behind them, Thun and Janssen lent a willing ear. They promptly set up a battery of braiders and established themselves in a second field of manufacture.

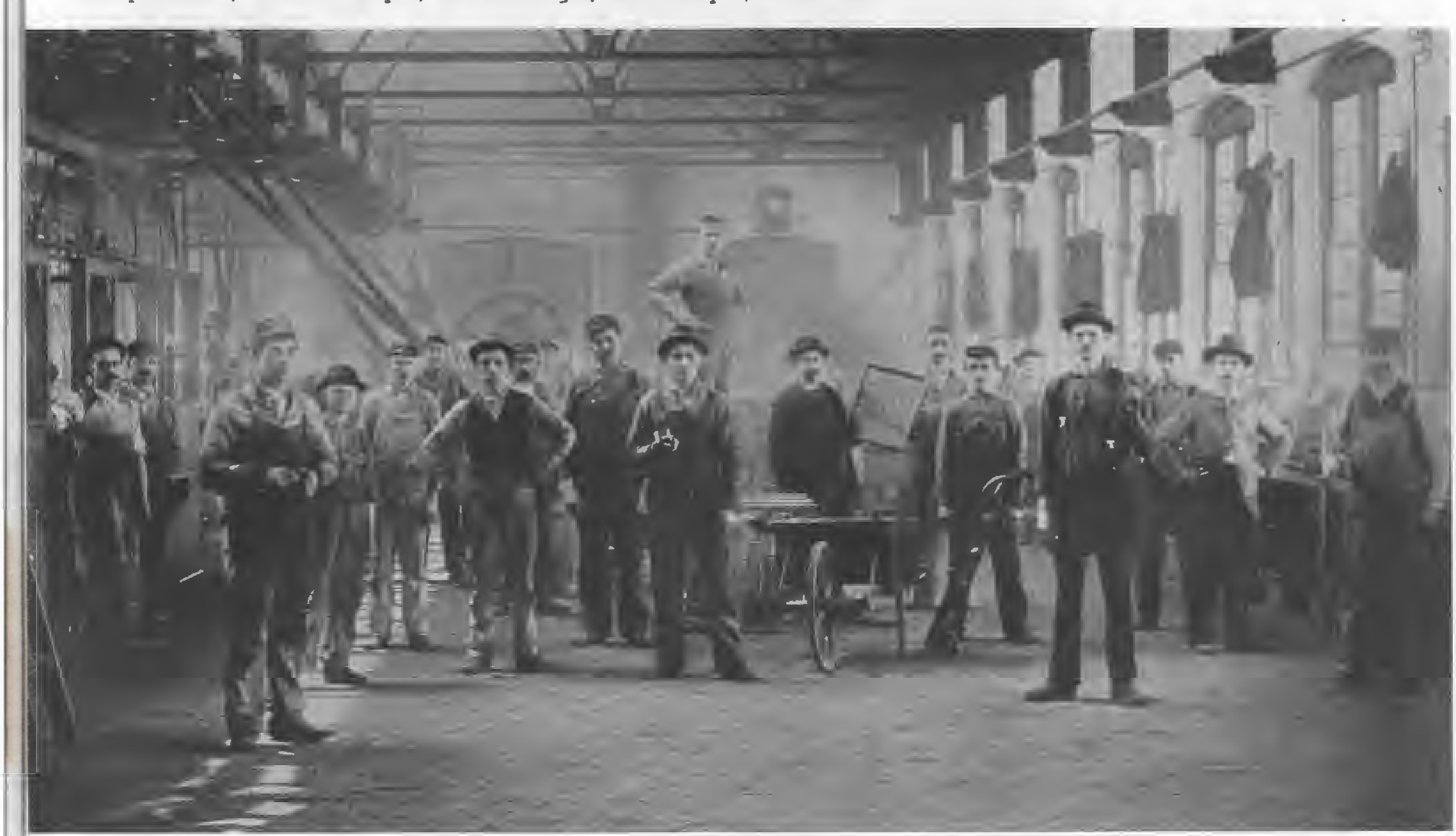
This led eventually to important developments, including the admission of Mr. Feder into the business with additional capital for expansion. The new department was duly set apart as a separate business, and on January 2, 1900, was incorporated as the Narrow Fabric Company.

Even before this momentous occasion, small additions had been built, and now the shop was again extended at its western end. The brush braids that were the cause of the new need for space were destined shortly to go into oblivion, but other braided products for dressmaking and still others for a thousand uses would more than replace them.

What turned out to be of even more importance was another effect from the same cause. With the shortening of skirts and the end of brush braids, there was to be a prodigious task for the full-fashioned knitting machine. But that is another story.



Of this early group representing both the shop and the office, five are still in the service of the Textile Machine Works: Henry Janssen, William Moyer, Abe Schlegel, Evan Moyer, Peter Moos



The first shop and its men. Two of them are still with "Textile": Abe Schlegel, William Moyer

# CHAPTER 3

## TEXTILE MACHINE WORKS

The close of the nineteenth century found the Textile Machine Works in a strategic position to take advantage of any changing conditions that might be discerned in the machinery market. As it turned out, the time was ripe for bold moves. The war with Spain had been impressive evidence of America's growing international importance, and jaunty optimism was everywhere apparent. Science and industry were joining hands to break down the barriers of time and distance. The world was awheel, and factories were working overtime to turn out bicycles to supply the demand. Though the recklessness of "scorchers" met with general condemnation, ten million riders in America were discovering the thrill of speed.

In the midst of this changing tempo, the young manufacturers were aware of new problems of their own. In place of the early struggle for existence,

Interior of the early office of the Textile Machine Works

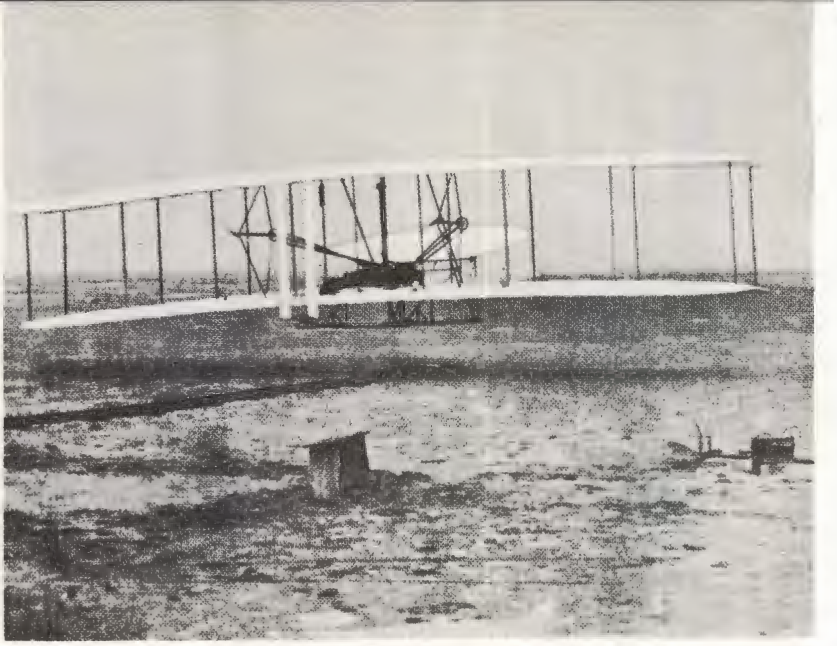
Seven of these men are with the Textile Machine Works today: William Moyer, Evan Moyer, Abe Schlegel, Peter Moos, Alvin Brumbach, George Renninger, Edward Hart

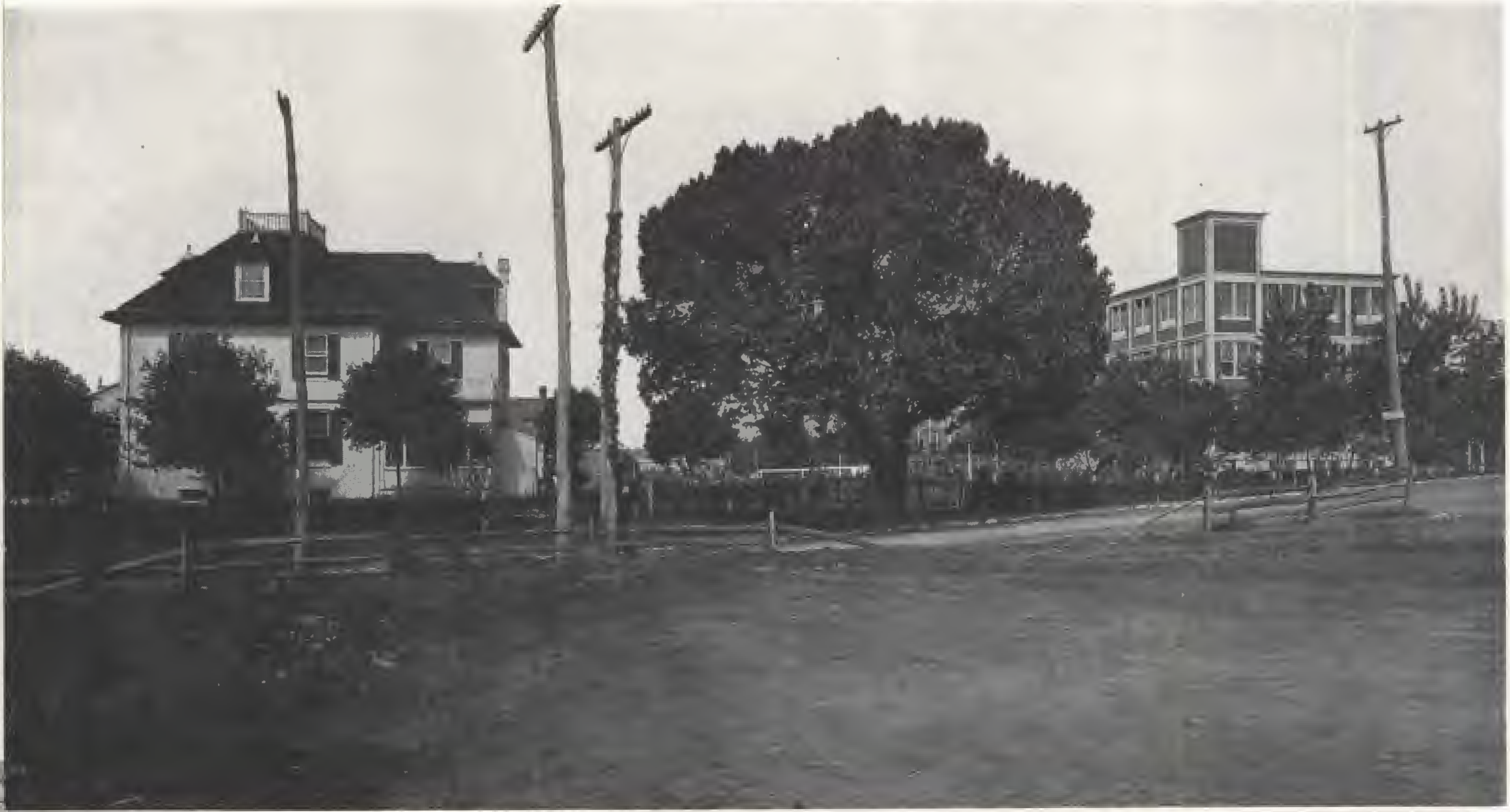
Six of these old-timers are still with the Wyomissing Industries. They are: Abe Schlegel, Peter Moos, Alvin Brumbach, William Moyer, Evan Moyer and Carl F. Meyer there were now questions of growth and management. A new department had started and almost immediately had launched forth on a separate existence. Experimental work in still another field had confirmed a confident belief that Thun & Janssen might challenge the supremacy of imported hosiery machines. On August 14, 1900, the company incorporated as the Textile Machine Works.

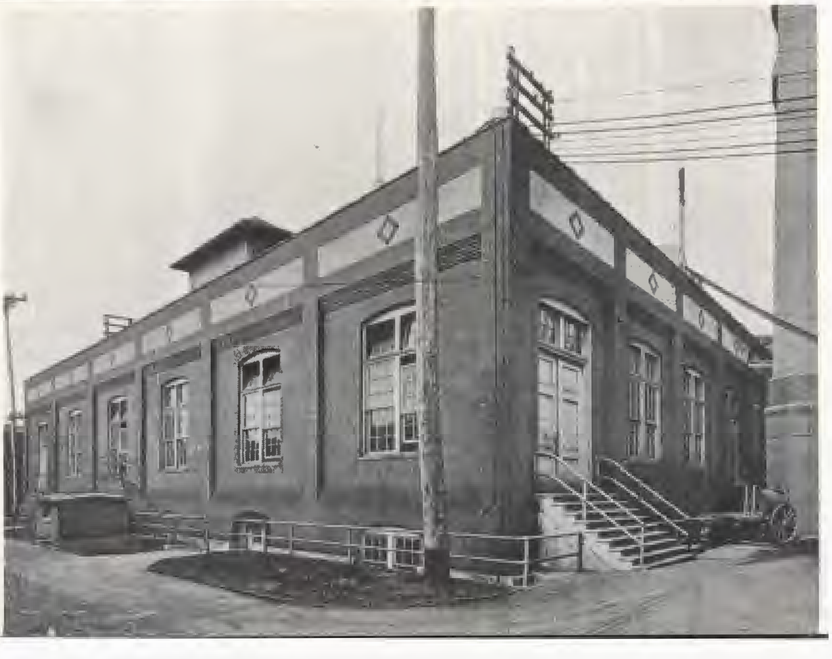
Full-fashioned hosiery was still a luxury and there was little indication that it might some day find a mass market. True, there was a growing demand for "women's freedom," which included emancipation from firmly established ideas as to clothing. A "Dress Reform Congress" was held at the World's Fair in 1893, and Rainy-Day Clubs were organized forthwith to popularize the rainy-day skirt, which completely cleared the ground. The last bulwark of extreme conservatism ended with the Victorian Era in 1901. In spite of the first tentative moves toward a shortened skirt, however, high shoes remained unquestioned, and cotton hosiery—most of it seamless—was dominant.

To supply the limited market for full-fashioned hosiery, very few machines were needed. Nevertheless, the Company started to produce them in earnest. There had been extensions to the machine shop in the late nineties, and again in 1900, when the plant kept about seventy workmen busy. In 1901 a foundry was started on a modest scale; this and other departments grew rapidly, and by 1903 there were two hundred and fifty employees. The additions to the buildings, together with a stable, marked the beginning of physical expansion

The first flight of the Wright Brothers, lasting twelve seconds, was made December 17, 1903


Acme


The approach to the Textile Machine Works had a rural touch as late as 1904. The house in the foreground was occupied by Mr. Janssen

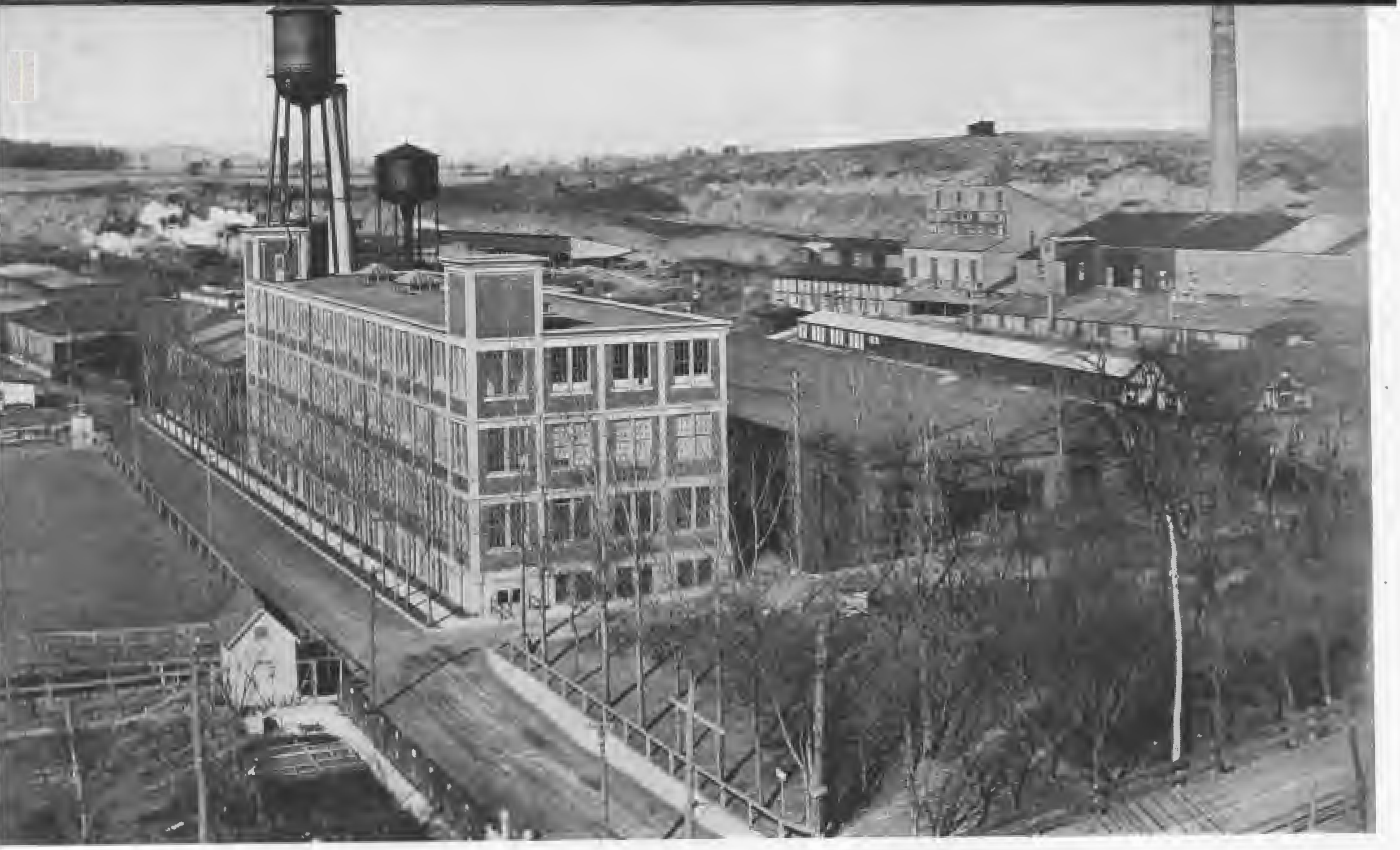

The Power House, built in 1910

that has been almost continuous and that has necessitated the repeated moving of departments for efficient production.

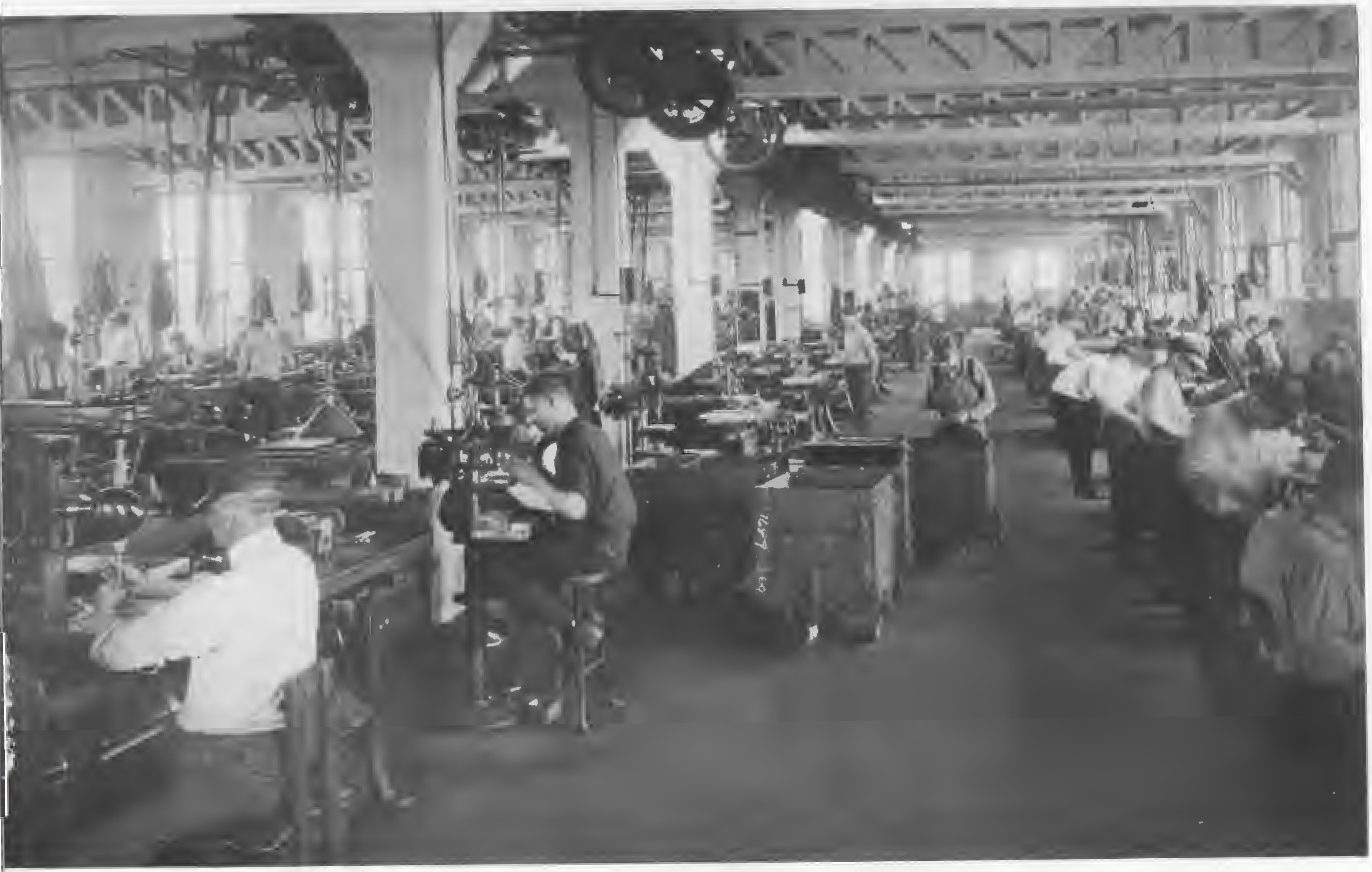
Rapid growth necessitated the erection of one building after another in quick succession; up to 1908 these included a two-story building for the Pattern Shop and Grinding Room, a four-story concrete building that was divided between the Narrow Fabric Company and experimental work on full-fashioned hosiery, a group of three buildings for the use of the Foundry, which were almost immediately outgrown, and a second and larger group of three buildings into which that department was transferred. This move turned over to other departments the original Foundry buildings, which also were doubled in size within this period of expansion. These numerous additions required the organizing of a construction force that became permanent.

The trend toward the instep-length skirt during these years was quite noticeable, and with it an increasing interest in stockings of better appearance. The Experimental Department tried out various new developments in the full-fashioned machine both by studying their action and by testing the knitted product. The hosiery thus produced was of excellent grade, and the natural outcome was the inauguration of a full-fledged hosiery mill which was incorporated on July 12, 1906, as the Berkshire Knitting Mills.

By 1910 the advantages of full-fashioned hosiery were becoming known. Silk was replacing cotton rapidly; it lent itself well to the full-fashioning



By 1913 the Textile Machine Works assumed the proportions of a sizable plant



The Small Parts Departments occupied what is now the office building process and helped to create a demand for the machines. More braiding machines than ever were also being sold, for though brush binding and some other braided products had gone out of use, new types of braiding such as insulated wire and rubber hose had more than made up the loss. Industrial uses for braiding were not new, but from this time on they became increasingly important and called for large, expensive units. In line with steady improvements in plant efficiency to handle this increased production, a new power house was built, the first of a number of facilities planned for the three Industries jointly. A tunnel system was then installed to carry all steam, water-return, and compressed-air pipes, and cables for power, light and telephone service. This was extended until more than a mile and a half of well lighted and ventilated tunnel connected the various buildings, affording many economies and obvious improvement in the appearance of the grounds.

Fate made another dramatic entrance into the story of the Textile Machine Works with the outbreak of war in Europe; the importation of full-fashioned machines was interrupted. The war also lent a military touch to styles and accelerated the tendency toward skirts really suited to business offices and street wear. There was an almost immediate improvement in the market for American machines. Braiding machines were also needed to supply materials used in uniforms and equipment. The increased production schedules started another intensified building program, beginning in 1916 with further

Harry, Dick, Duke and Bill took four consecutive prizes at the Reading Fair

For the prize-winning teams this stable was built in 1917

Acme

The Sarajevo incident, June 28, 1914, which had important effects on the Wyomissing Industries

The automotive equipment of 1913

extensions of the Foundry buildings which practically doubled their size. Even more relief was found in the construction of a huge machine shop in 1917 and 1918, which afforded space for many large machines.

No less necessary was a special building for the production of the small parts that make the heart of a knitting machine; this was provided in 1921. By 1925 full-fashioned hosiery had become a necessity to such a large part of the population that great numbers of machines for its production, together with many accessories, were being turned out. In that year the great machine shop was widened, bringing its floor space up to 235,000 square feet. Three years later a new building was provided to accommodate the Small Parts Departments, which turned over part of their old quarters to experimental work.

In order to provide sufficient foundry facilities to keep pace with the rapid growth of other departments, the Foundry was moved in 1928 into a vast structure of steel and glass, with equipment equally modern.

Then, when the country found itself plunged into such a depression as men had never thought possible, and when many luxuries were being abandoned for more substantial things, it was a question whether the demand for full-fashioned silk hosiery would continue, particularly after the lengthening of skirts in 1932. However, the sheer loveliness of a fine silk stocking seems to be proof against any vagaries of style and even the pinch of hard times. Through the Century of Progress and the New Deal, through the chain letter

1917—the first half of the Machine Shop was built

The Machine Shop was completed in 1925

Limestone country necessitated the Water Softening Plant craze and the rumblings of another war in Europe, the Textile Machine Works continued to fill a surprising number of orders for full-fashioned machines. At the same time, the whimsical demands of fashion and the imperative needs of industry continued to make work for braiding machines, while the adaptability of the new Foundry facilities enabled the Company to supply a score of outside industries with the castings they need.

Today the Textile Machine Works and the Industries that have sprung from it present a panorama of purposeful activity. They are much more than a monument to the two industrious men who brought them into existence and who have guided them for nearly half a century. The Wyomissing Industries are a cross section of the America that drew these two from their native land, the America into whose life they have been taken to such mutual advantage.

Old building of the Small Parts Departments, 1921

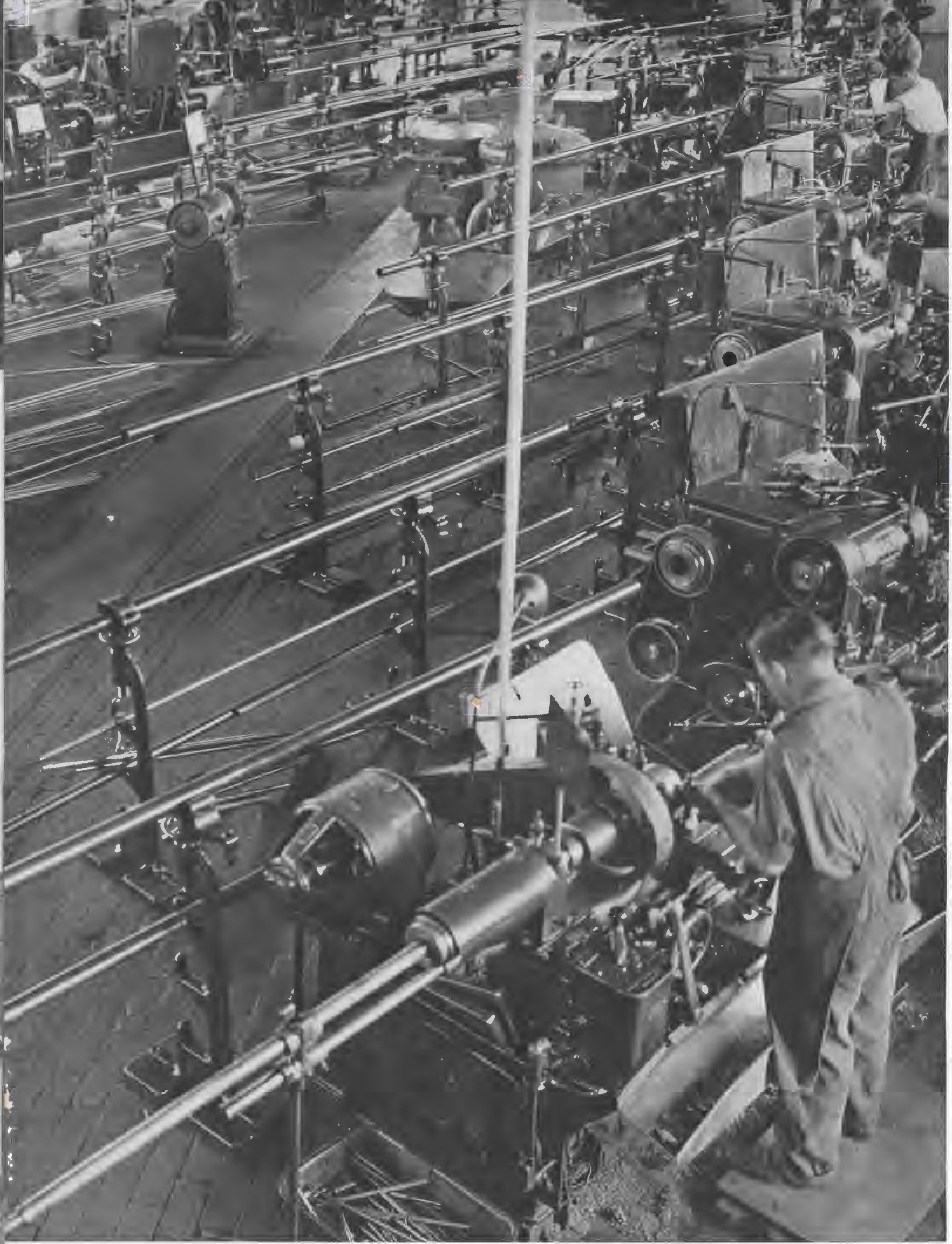
The main Machine Shop, completed 1925

Looking toward the Power Plant

New building of the Small Parts Departments, 1928

Main Office of the Textile Machine Works

The Machine Shop Office

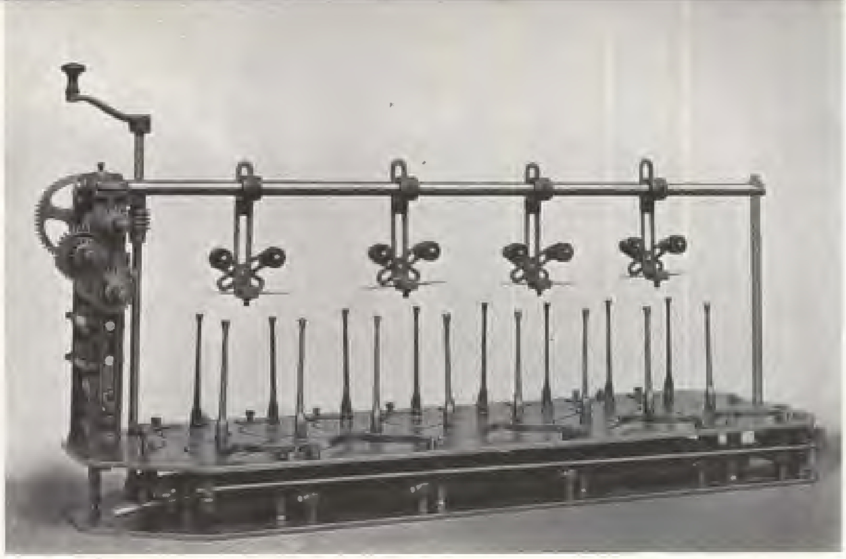


# CHAPTER 4

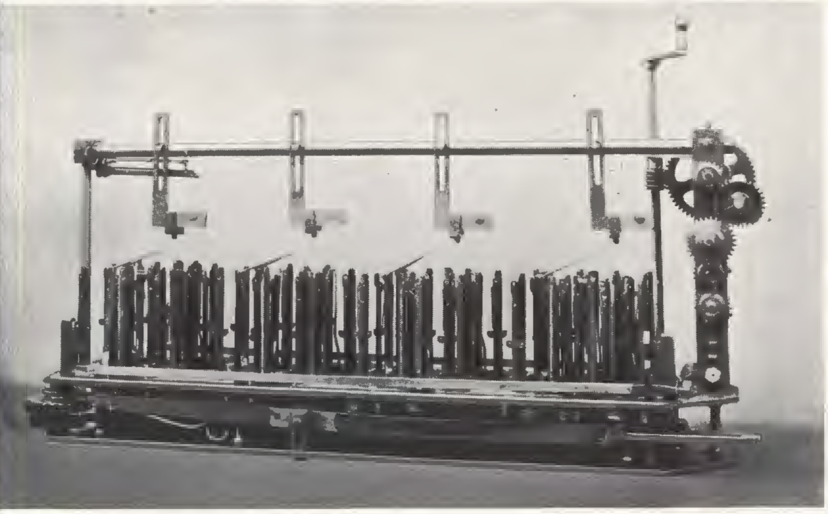
## TEXTILE MACHINE WORKS PRODUCTS

It is a long call from the few repair orders which buoyed up the hopes of the young business men on Cedar Street to the well-established trademark "Reading," which covers a great variety of machines today. And, while there is a vast difference in the kind and number of Textile Machine Works' products now, there has been no change from the simple formula—an absolute insistence on finest workmanship. That was the outstanding feature of the first machines; unquestionably it is the first principle of "Reading" products today.

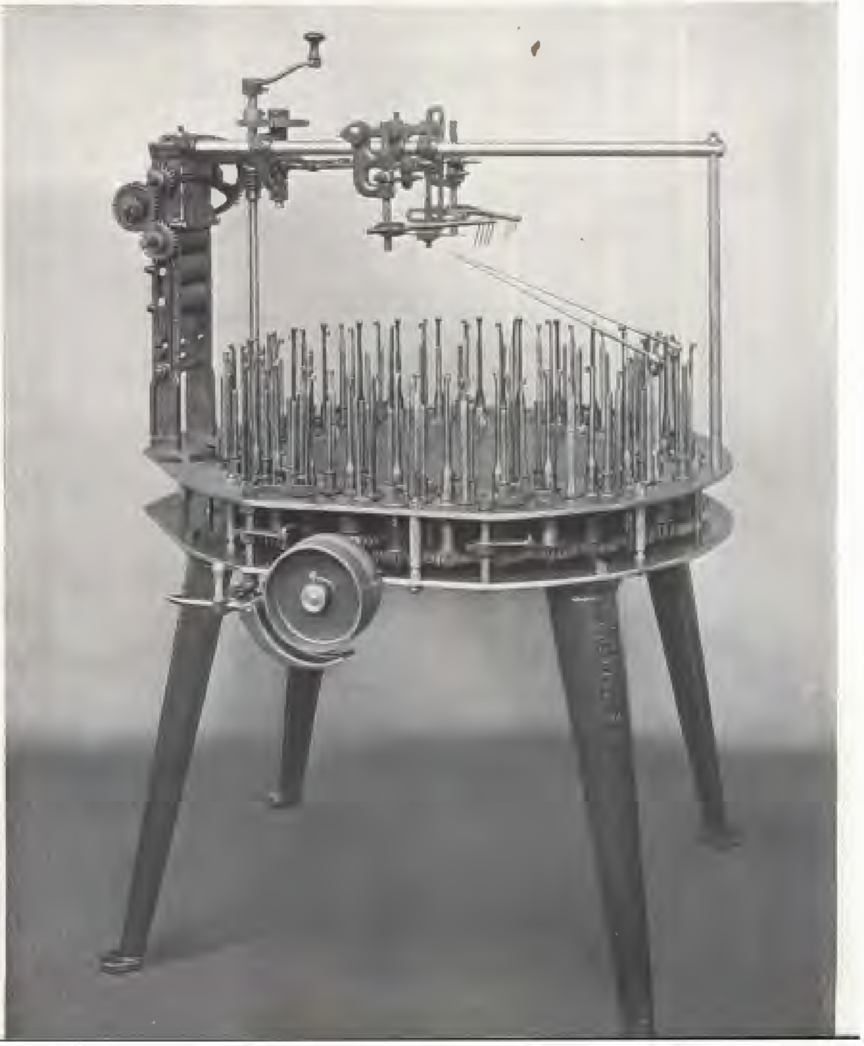
Success came slowly at first. Five long months—from July to November of 1892—elapsed before the Company was able to get its first order for a single braiding machine. It was not until the next year that a second order—this time for a battery of machines—was received.



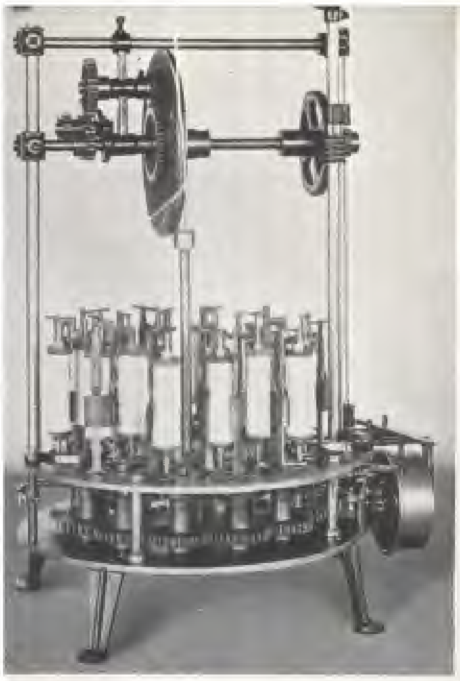
Early form of braider, used for making simple trimming braids



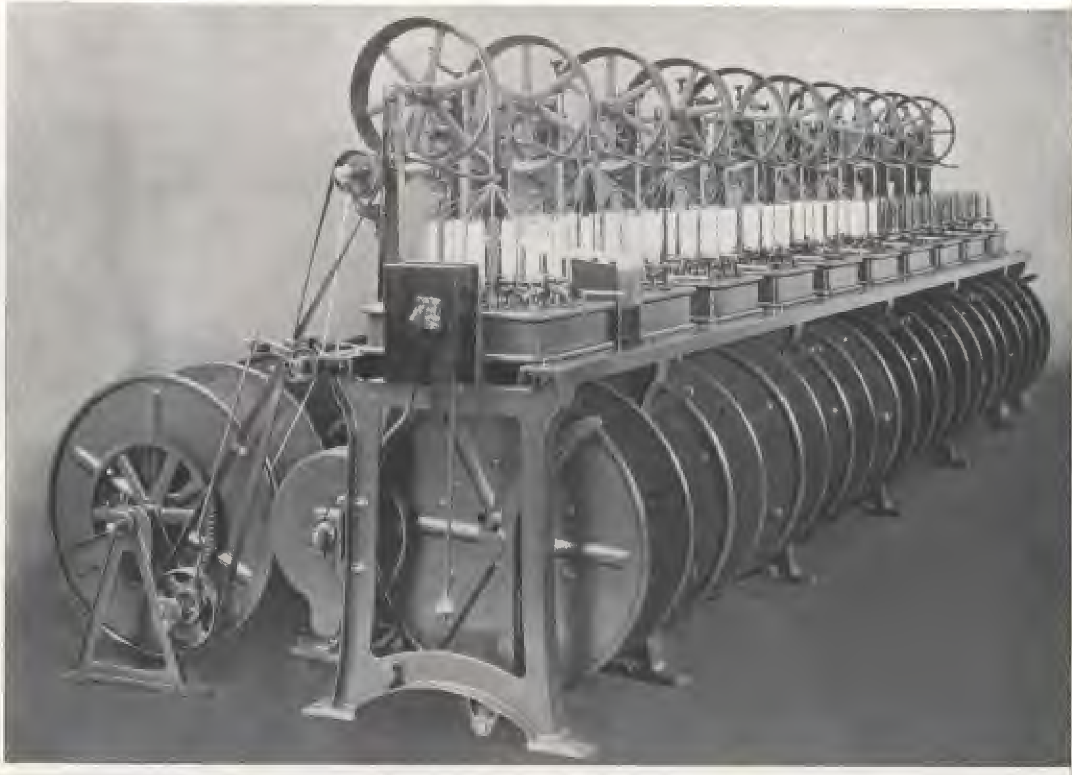
An early multiple head flat braider, as used in the trimming trade



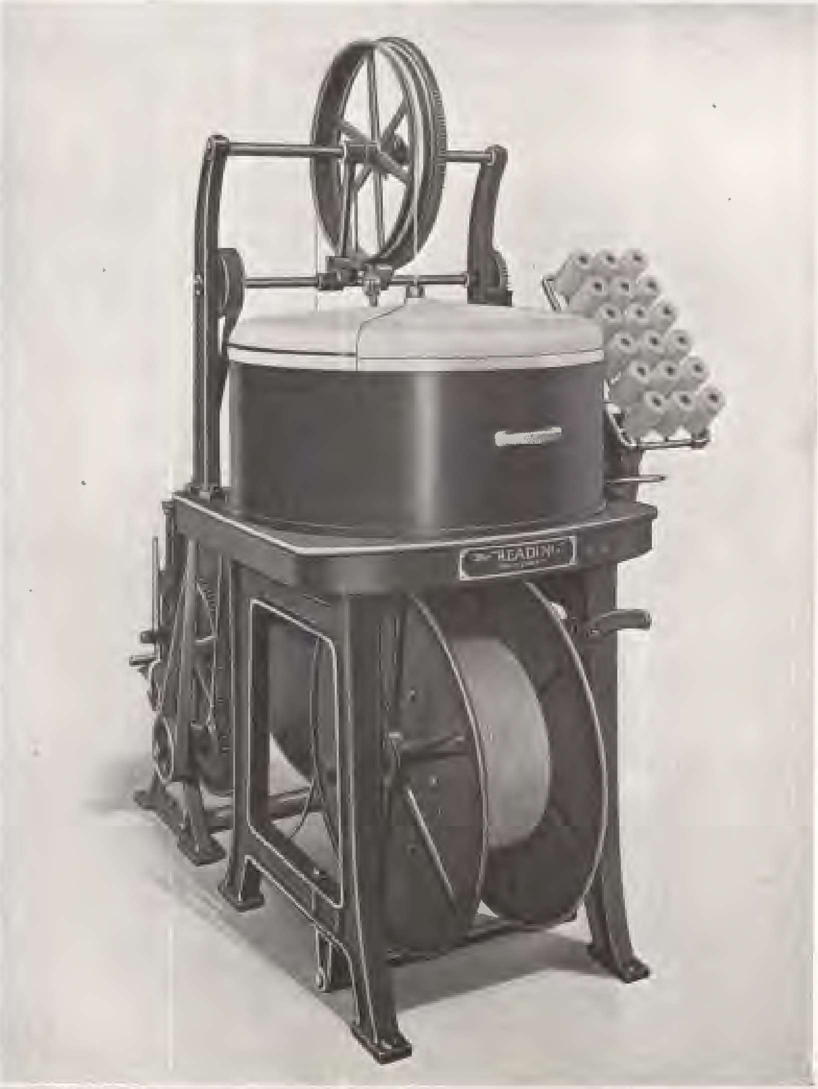
Early tubular braider used in making shoelaces, corset laces, and certain types of fancy braids



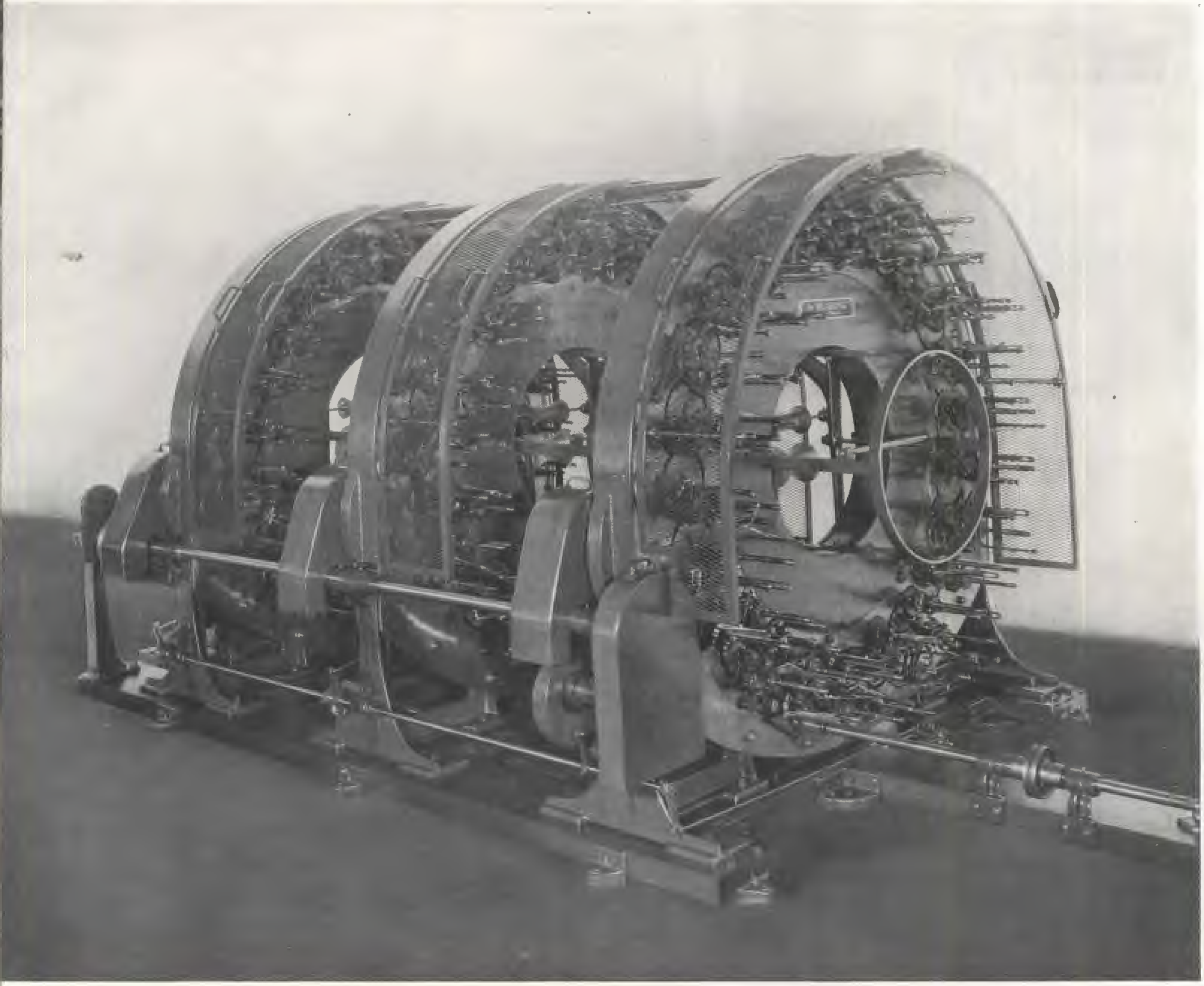
Early wire-covering braider



Later; multiple-unit wire-covering braider



Rotary braider; the last word in wire-covering

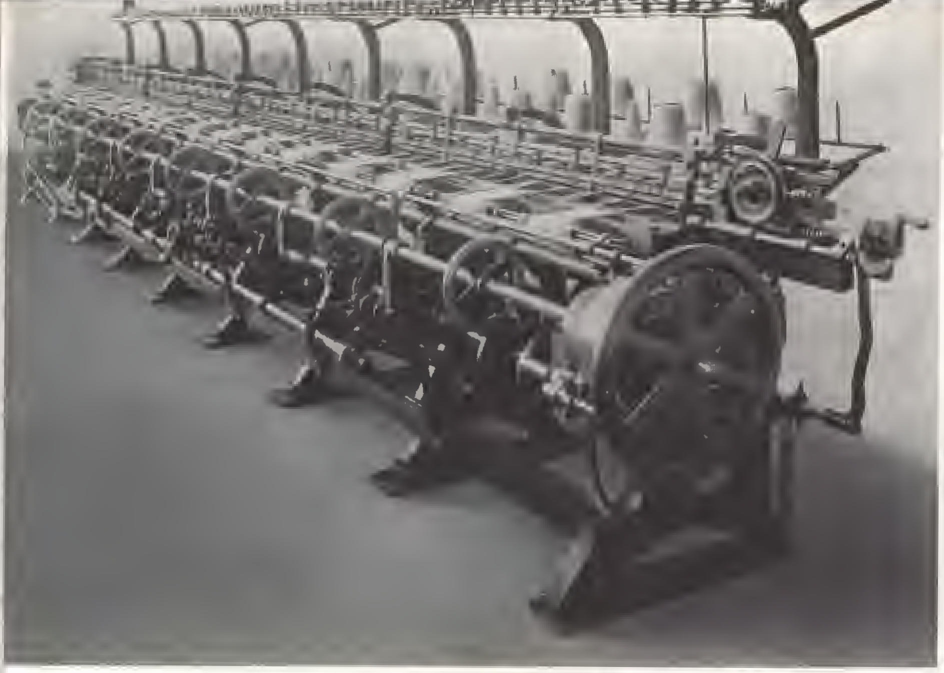


Textile Machine Works' largest rubber hose braider (Triple-deck horizontal)

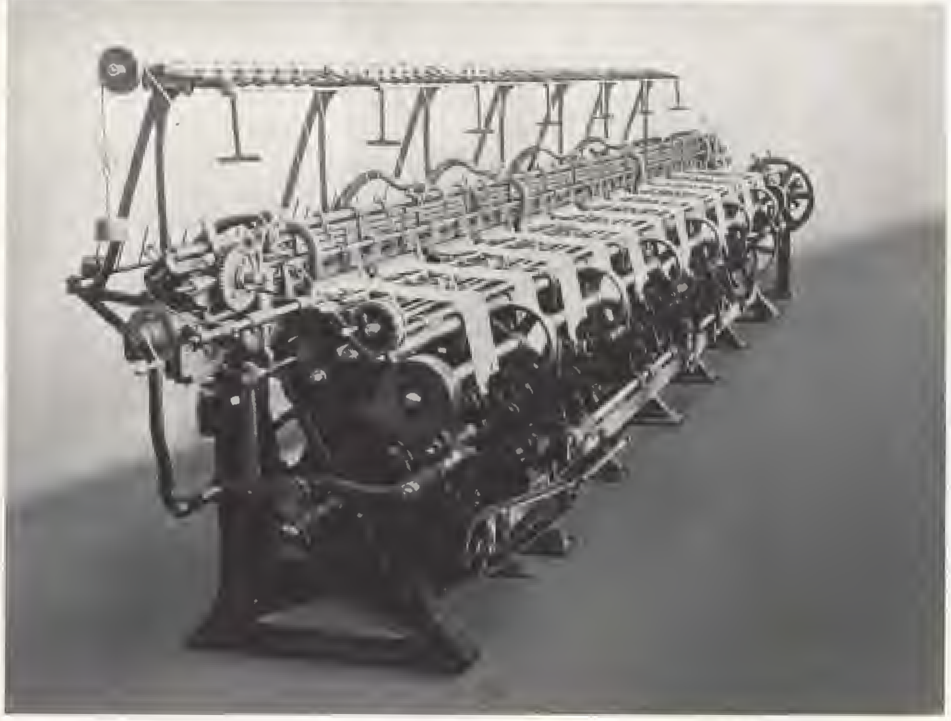
From the very beginning the young partners undertook to build all types of braiding machines. One of their first pieces of advertising in May, 1893, announced not only "Braiding Machines for silk and mohair bindings, ladies' dress trimmings, fancy braids, soutaches, etc.," but also "machines for covering electrical wire, extra heavy machines for making braided packing, bisé machines, etc." In spite of this hopeful announcement, orders in the early years of the business remained very scarce.

The partners used their spare time in these first lean years to improve their product and to develop new devices for braiding machines. More than a score of patents in the name of Janssen or Thun testify to the intense interest which they had in improving the braiding machine and its product.

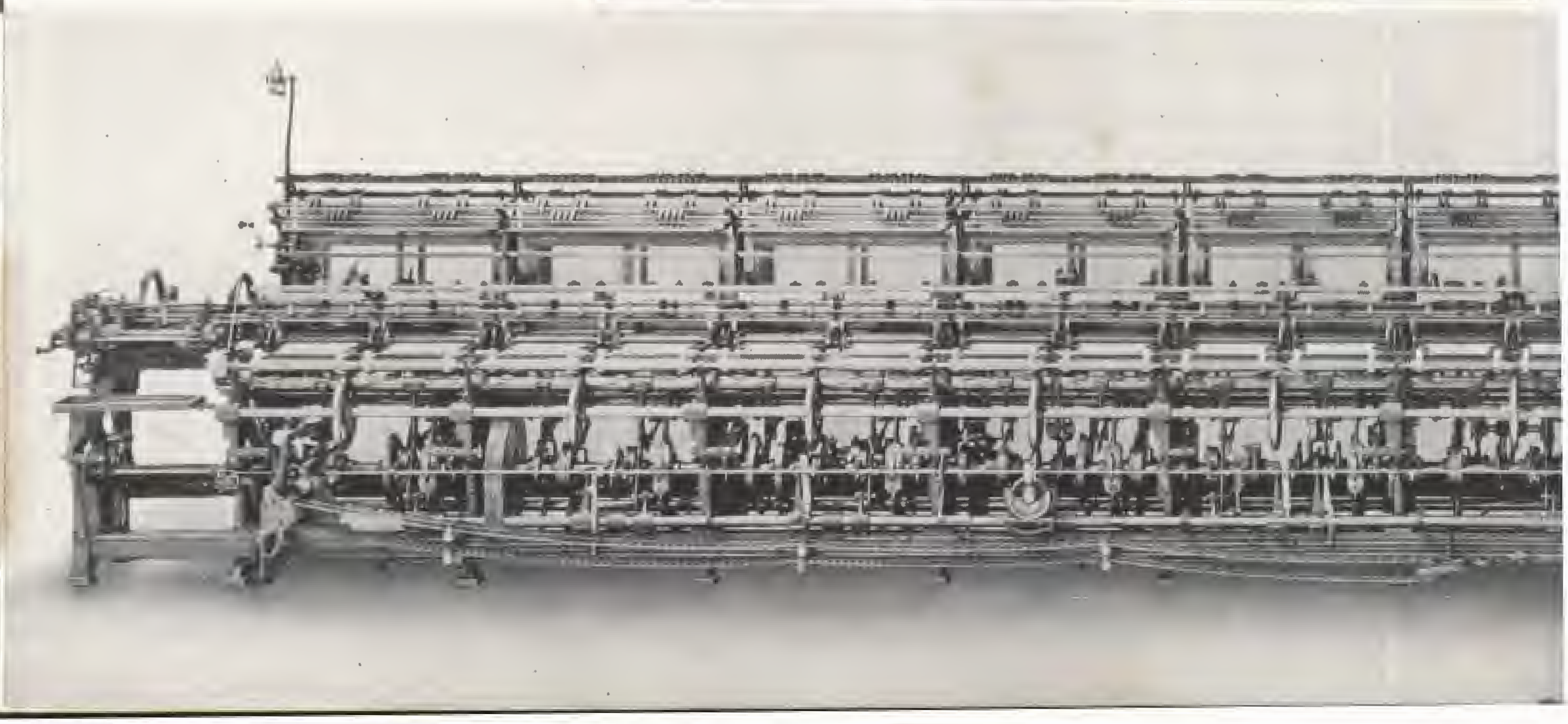
From the very outset the Textile Machine Works' braider came into competition with similar braiders made in Germany. The first years of the business were devoted to a constant campaign to convince domestic manufacturers that good braiding machines could be made in this country. The "Reading" product embodied not only the sturdiness and simplicity of the German product, but also many improvements not to be found on imported machines. Chief of these was the straightening and grinding of plates to uniform thickness. This made carriers from one machine interchangeable with another, long before interchangeability had become a recognized principle of good manufacturing, and helped to win acceptance for the American-made machines.

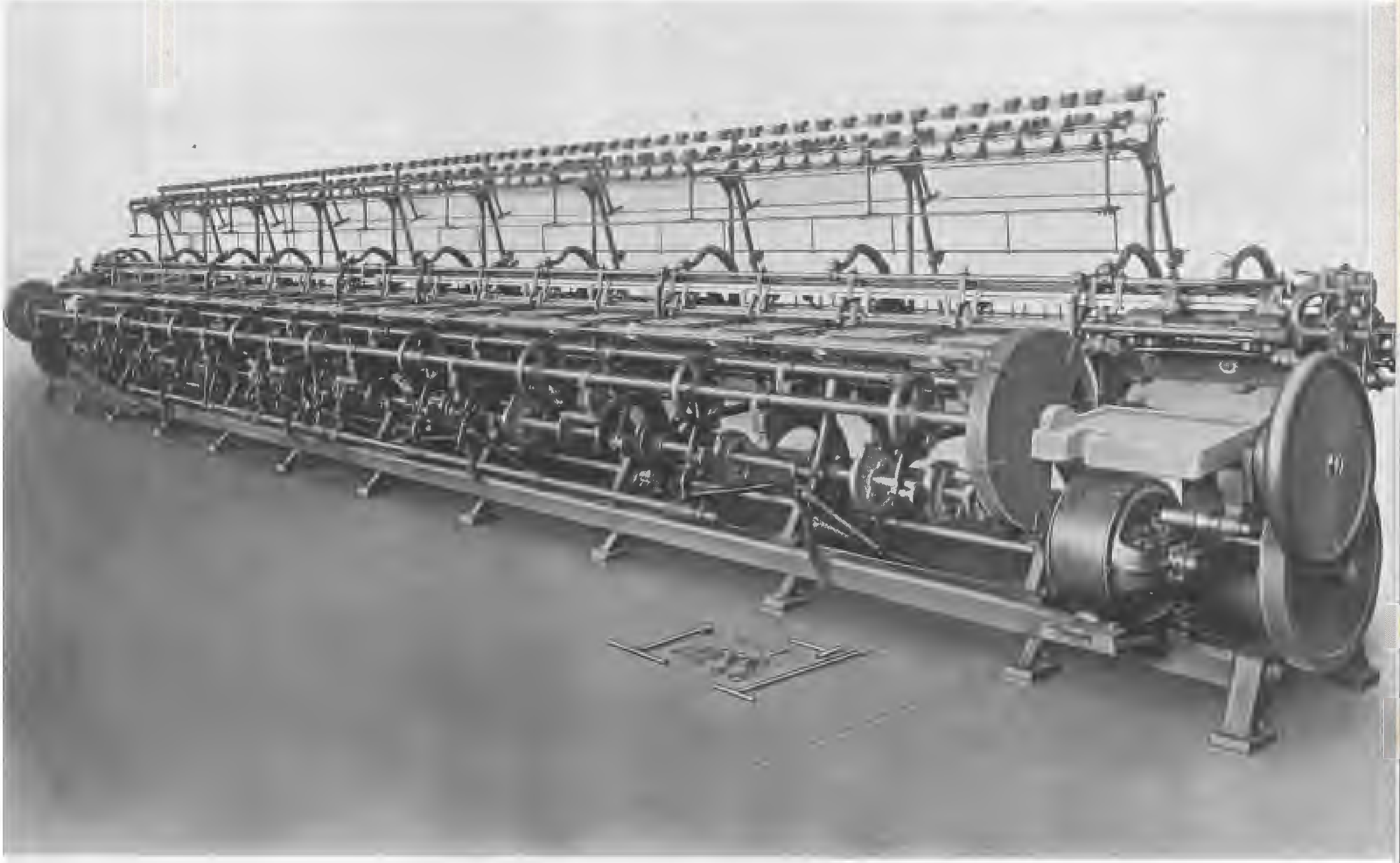


The first "Reading" Legger



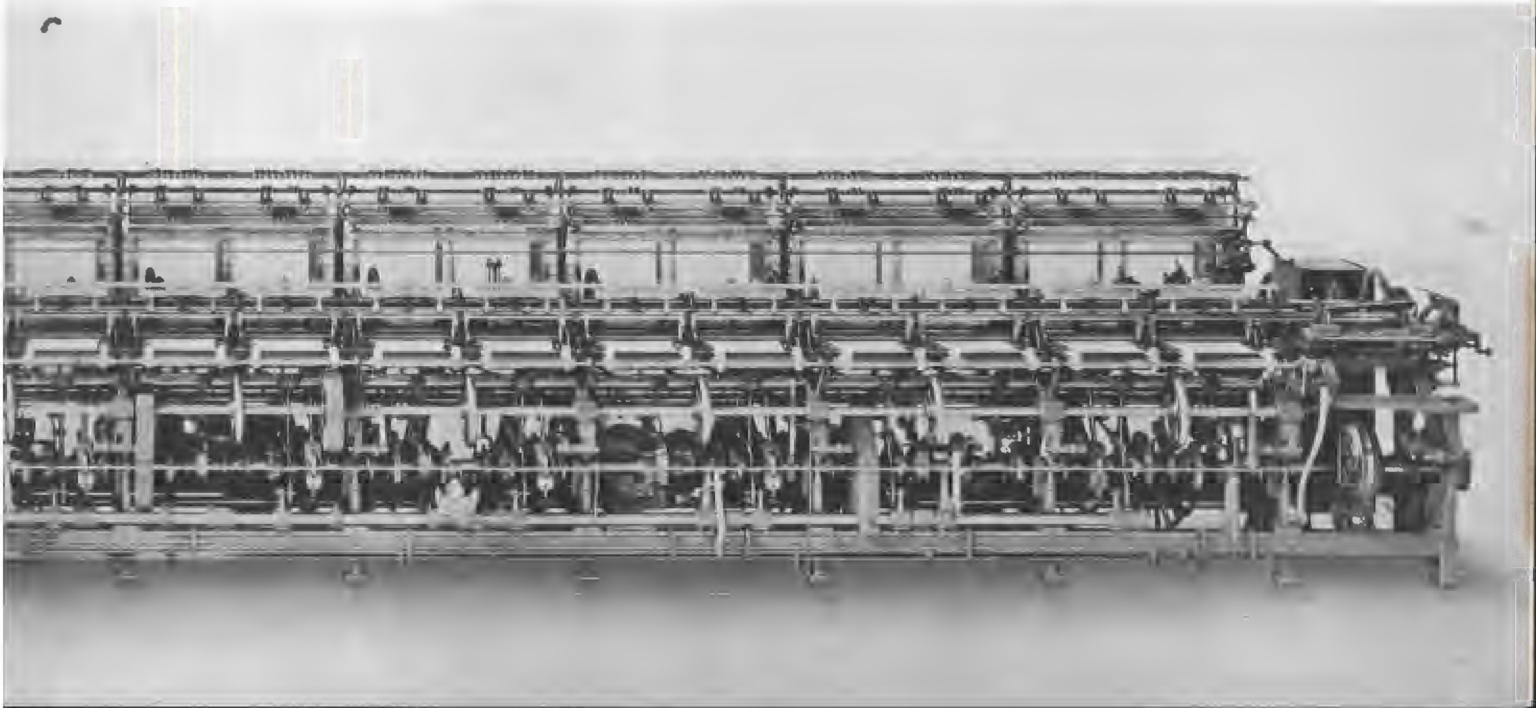
The first "Reading" Footer

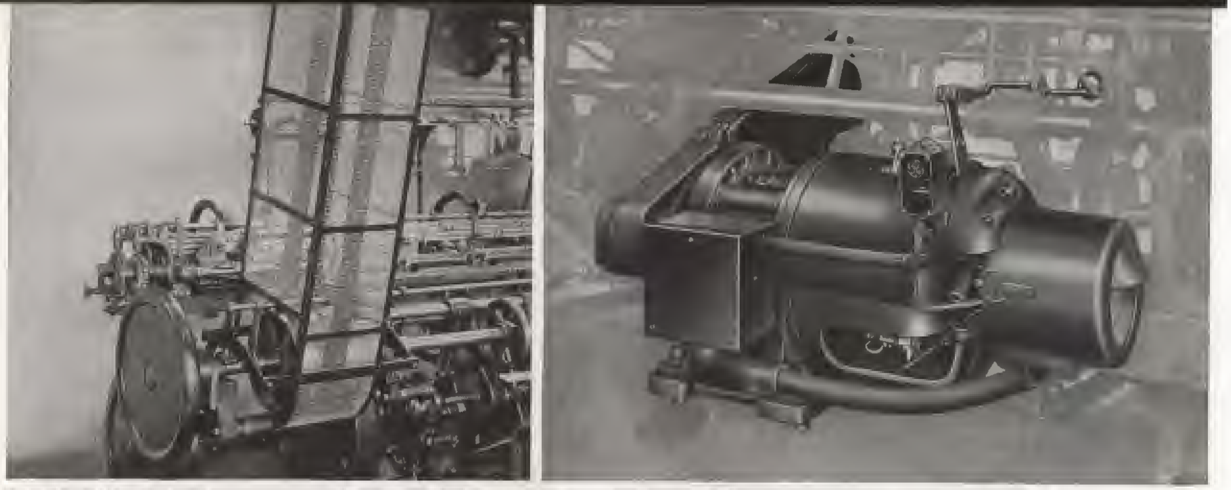




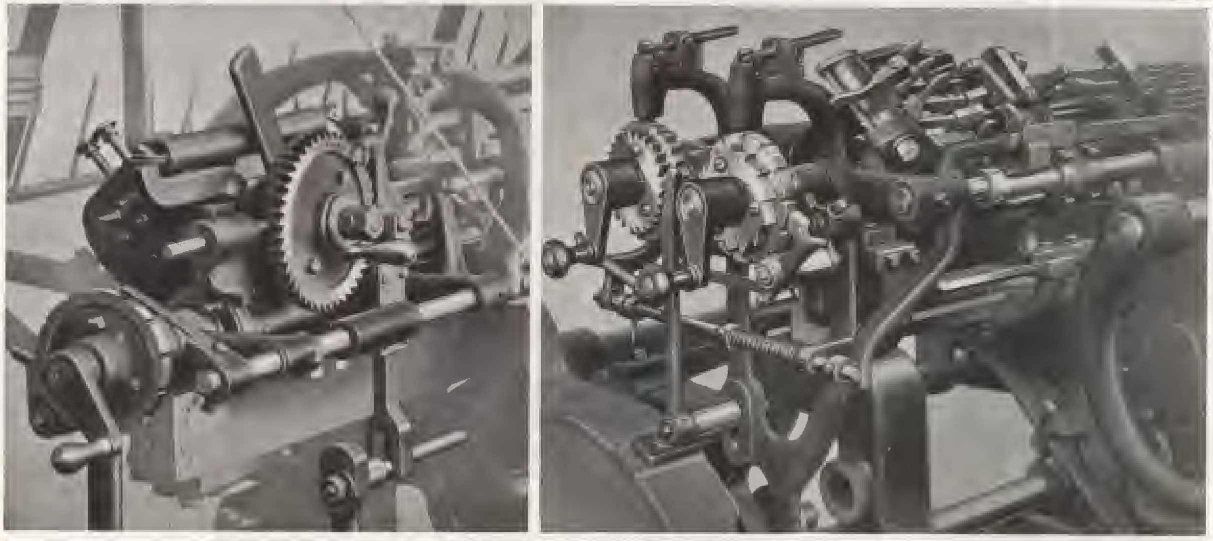
The individual motor drive was introduced in 1909

The 1936 "Reading" high-production full-fashioned knitting machine

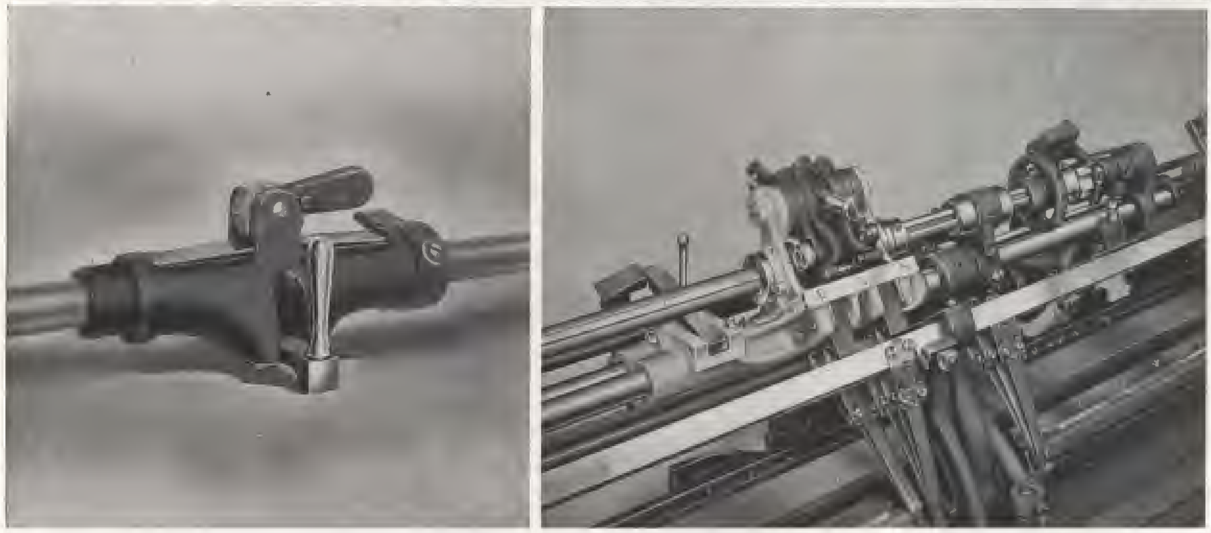




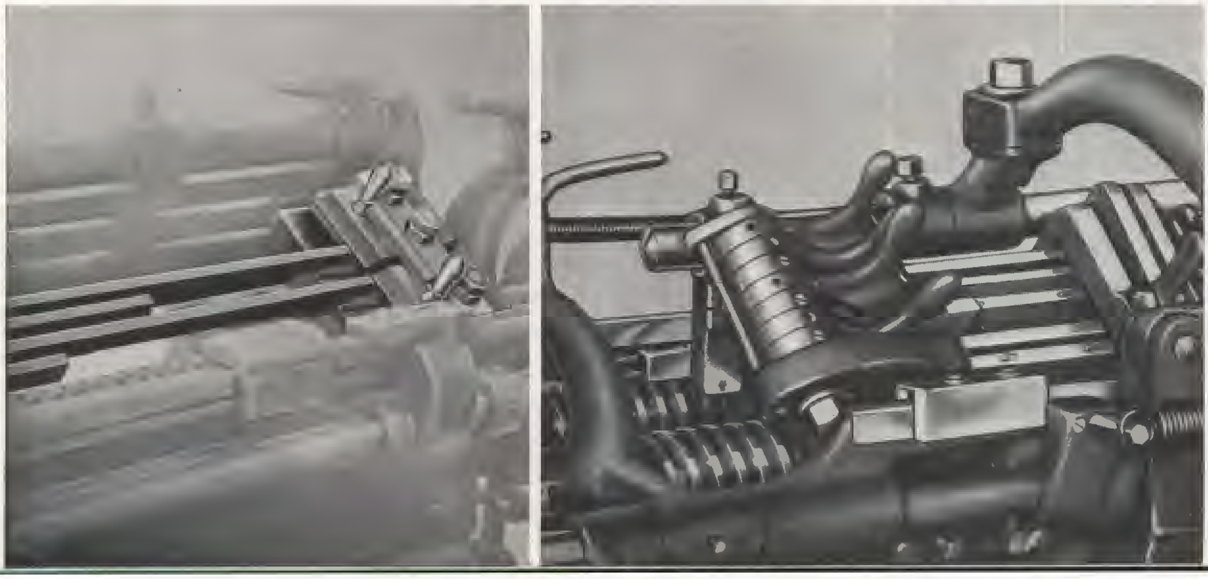
In 1909 the individual motor supplanted the belt drive



Old and new type narrowing heads



Old type friction box and new three-carrier alternating friction box

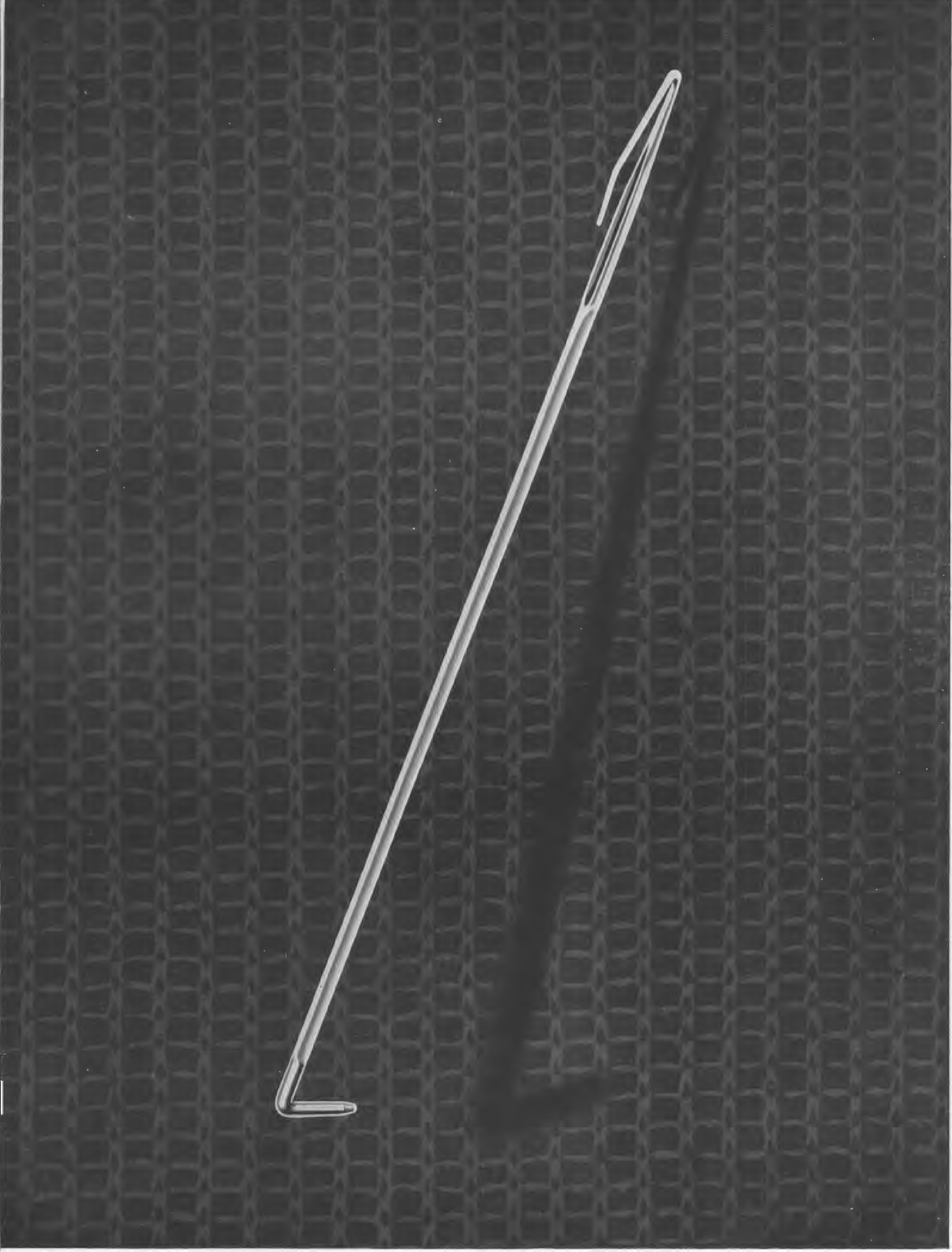


Old style and new bell crank end stop levers

With changing times, the Textile Machine Works developed and perfected new "Reading" machines for various braided products that came into vogue. Today the name "Reading" is known in the trimming trade, to the manufacturers of millinery braid, to the electrical and wire covering industry, and to the large rubber companies manufacturing braided hose. To this far-flung group of customers the name "Reading" is the assurance of excellence for the product; it also symbolizes a service which is of no less importance. Today the Textile Machine Works is the recognized center for information on braiding problems, and the confidence of those seeking advice is appreciated just as much as the satisfaction of the customer who buys a "Reading" machine.

While braiding machines were the first product of the Cedar Street shop, the active minds of the partners were already searching for a new product. Numerous other articles were made and offered for sale: doublers, winders, measuring machines. It was not until 1898, however, that work was begun on what was to become the most important "Reading" product—the full-fashioned knitting machine.

The first machine produced was a sixteen section, 33-gauge legger driven by a belt at a speed of 40 courses per minute. Compared to a 24-section, 51-gauge machine of today, running at a speed of 70 courses, it was rudimentary in the extreme. But again, as in the case of the braiding machine, it was the partners' ability to do work demanding the utmost accuracy and their



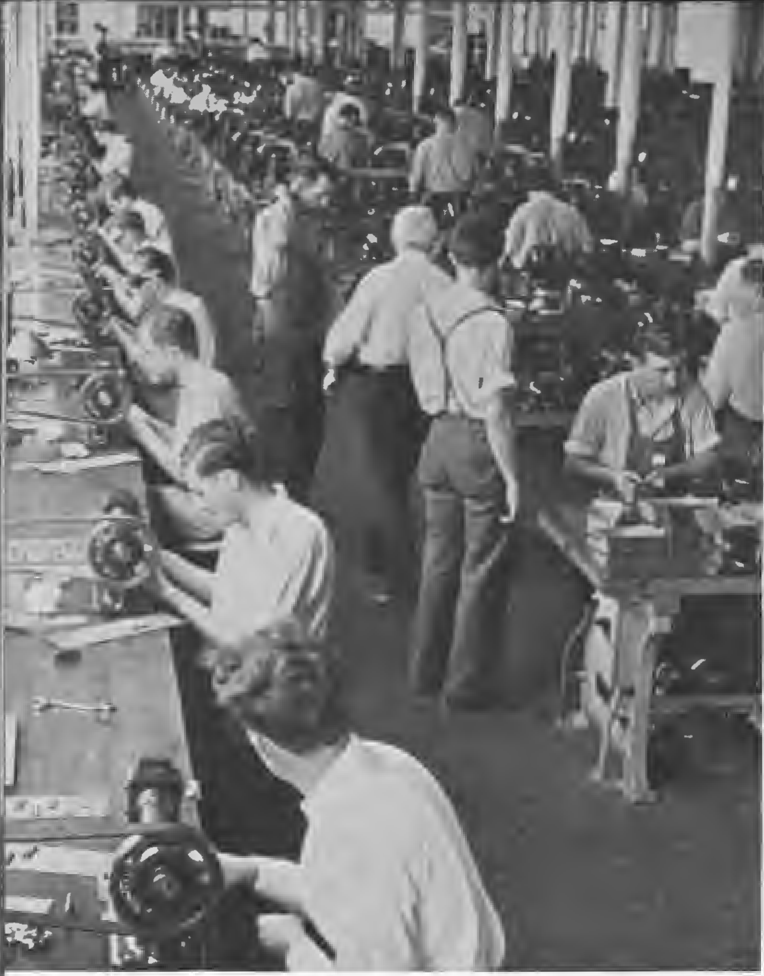
The "Reading" Needle

willingness to suffer innumerable disappointments which was eventually to bring them long-delayed success.

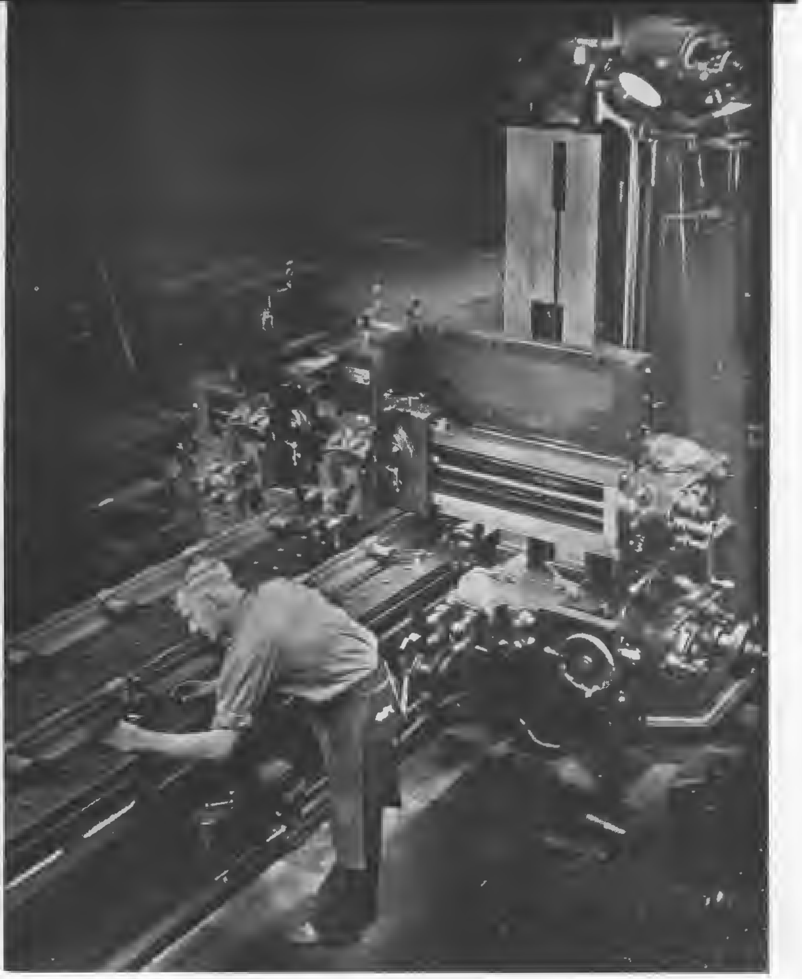
The development of the full-fashioned knitting machine is inseparably connected with the acceptance of the full-fashioned stocking. It is not to be supposed, however, that as styles created a demand for hosiery, orders for the machines poured into the office of the Textile Machine Works. Beginning with the first machines, sold to a Nazareth, Pennsylvania, knitting firm, only eight full-fashioned machines were sold up to 1907. There was discouragement from all sides. It is even recorded that as late as 1912 the Company considered the abandonment of the manufacture of full-fashioned machines, since the demand for them was too small to permit their being manufactured at a profit. Fortunately for Textile, it was decided to continue; within a year from that momentous and courageous action, most of the earlier hopes for the full-fashioned product were realized.

In 1913 the annual production first passed the hundred mark and by 1926 the yearly total reached one thousand machines. This phenomenal growth in the output of "Reading" full-fashioned knitting machines would not have been possible but for the policy of standardization adopted in the very first years of its manufacture.

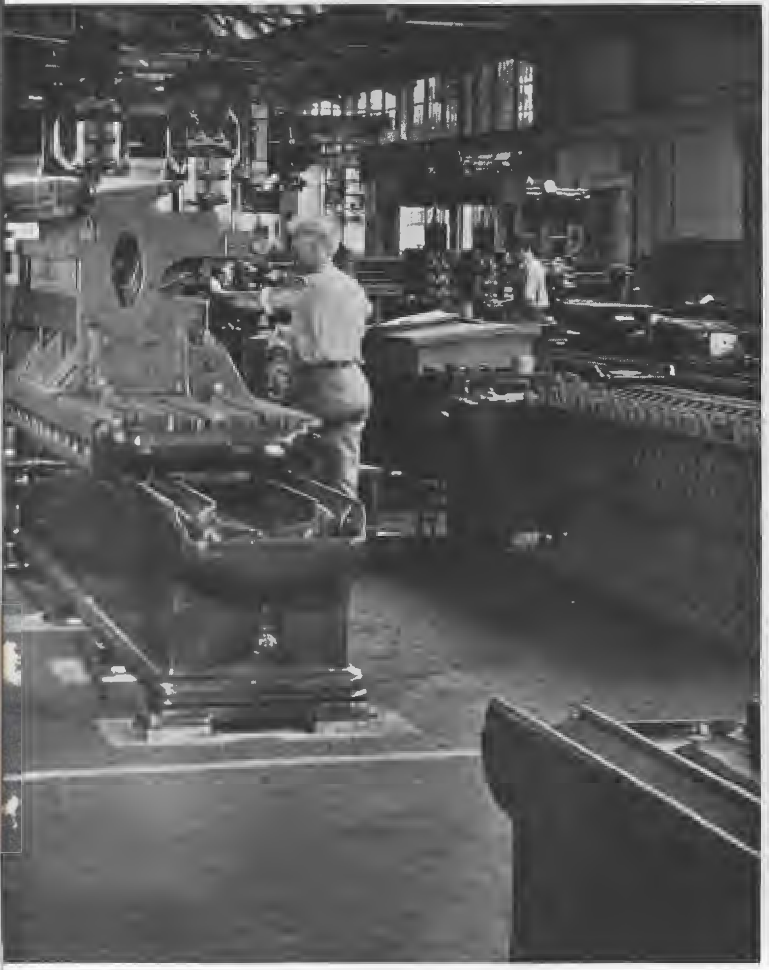
That policy meant manufacturing on a production basis, using jigs and fixtures to facilitate the work. It meant also subjecting each part to minute in-

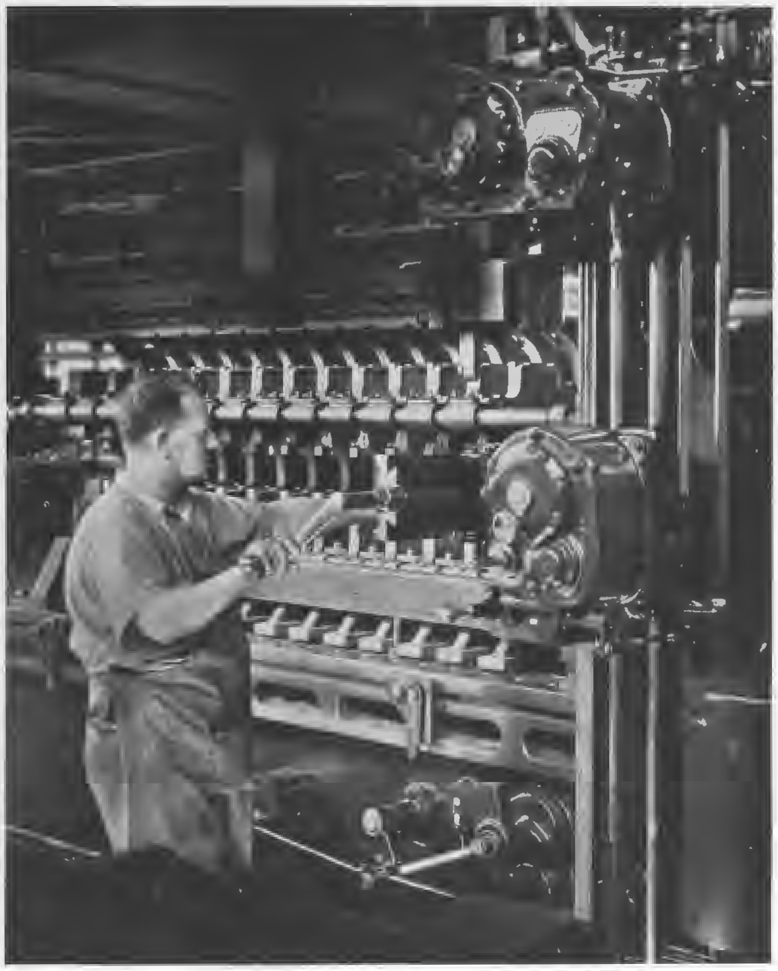


Needle Department



Planing the center bed





Planing the frame

spection in order to insure its conformity with the very small tolerances allowed by the Engineering Department. At the beginning of the century these principles were practically unknown, since the old idea of craftsmanship and individual responsibility was still in vogue. By standardizing its product and method of manufacture the Textile Machine Works was able to produce vastly more machines than would otherwise have been possible; it also supplied the knitting industry with a knitting machine which was ideally adapted to the instruction of unskilled help. After a knitter had been trained on one "Reading" machine, he could be transferred to another without again undergoing a lengthy training process.

Standardization also made it possible for knitting mills to order repair parts from stock with the full assurance that they could be used without the tedious fitting process that was necessary under the old "custom-built" system. It is therefore apparent that the policies laid down in the first years of the partnership were largely responsible for the ability of the Textile Machine Works to keep abreast of the phenomenal increase in the production of full-fashioned knitting machines after 1913.

Naturally, there have been accessory machines. Scores of them were designed for the braiding and millinery trades to perform every conceivable function in the early years of the business. Others in equal number have been made for turning out products of braided wire. In the hosiery field equally im-

Park Bench

Legger Table

Table and Expanding Examining Form with Dividing Rack

Electric Transfer Stamping Machine

Portable Centrifugal Extractor

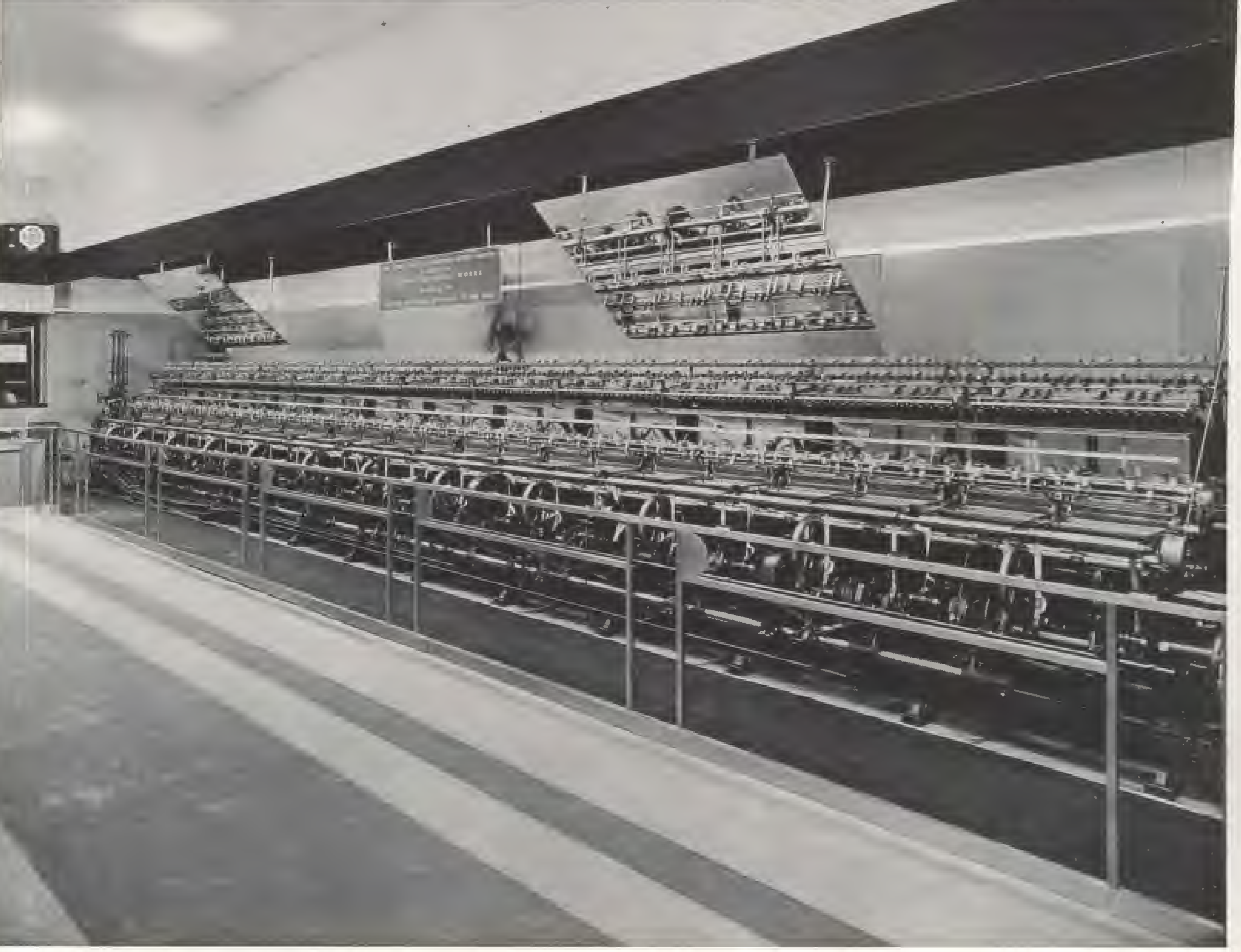
Metal Desk Calendar and Ash Receiver

Drilling and Tapping Machine

portant accessories have shared the reputation of the "Reading" full-fashioned machine, notably tables, examining forms, stamping machines and a centrifugal dryer. These accessories represent the same high standard of excellence as is embodied in the machine and have been adopted as standard equipment by most of the hosiery industry.

In addition to the parts that are marketed, the Textile Machine Works has had to provide for its own use many machines and accessories that were not available elsewhere. These include, for instance, trucks for shop use, many hundreds of which have been built for the Wyomissing Industries. The constant effort to improve machine shop practice has led to the building of many special machines, some of which have proved so outstanding for general use that they have been adopted in other plants as standard.

Latest, and in some respects most interesting of the products of the Textile Machine Works, is the "Reading" needle. Made of the finest materials by highly skilled workmen with special equipment, these needles and points are designed and manufactured with one aim—to supply users of full-fashioned knitting machines with the correct accessories for the highest production of quality fabric from their equipment. Rigid tests of the needle throughout all the manufacturing processes form a part of the regular routine, and ingenious testing devices have been perfected to insure uniformity in dimensions and temper of all these products.

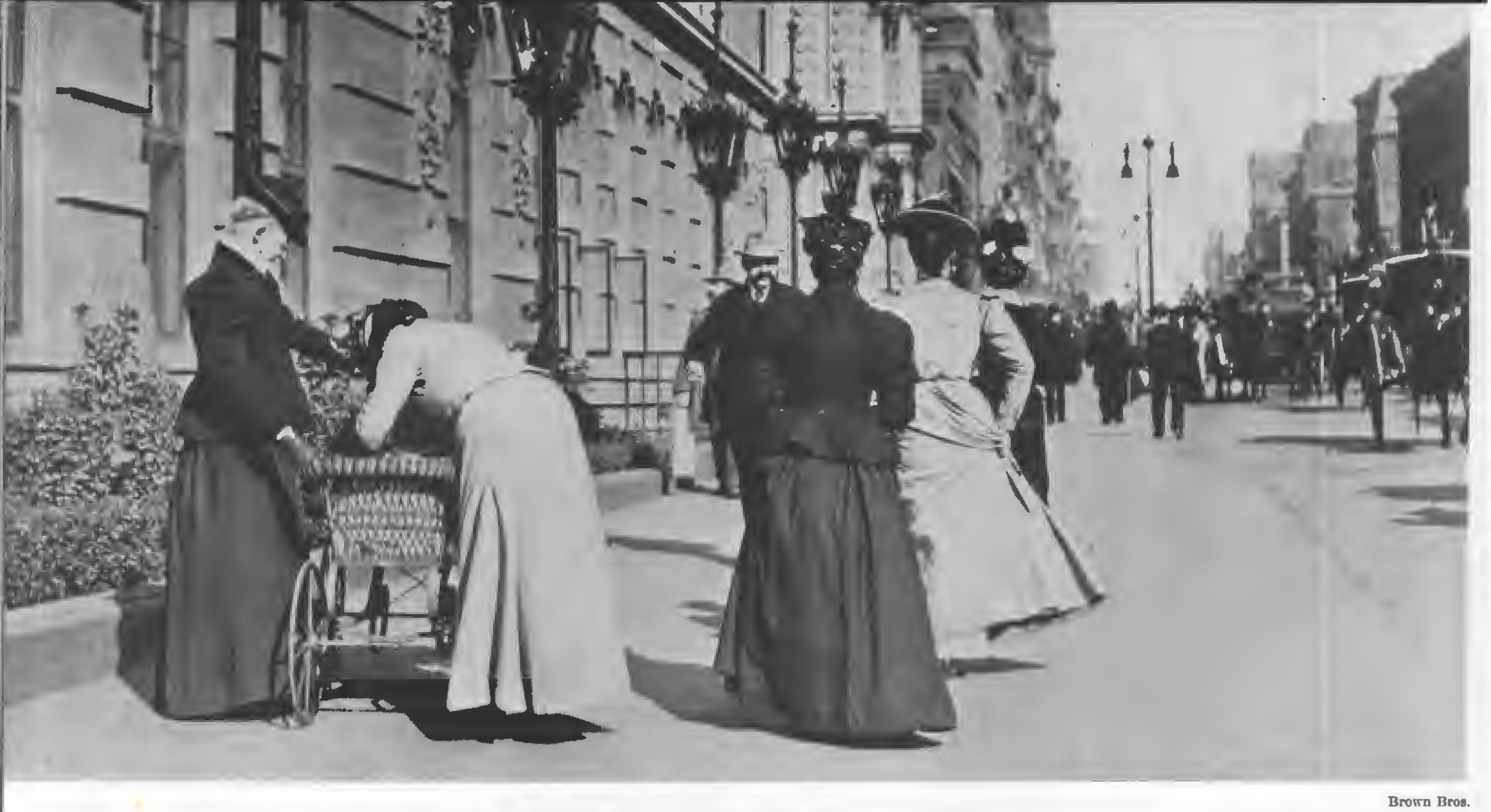


Millions of visitors to the Chicago "Century of Progress" marveled at the work of the "Reading" Full-Fashioned Machine

SESQUI-CENTENNIAL INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION · PHILADELPHIA · 1776-1926
MEDAL OF AWARD

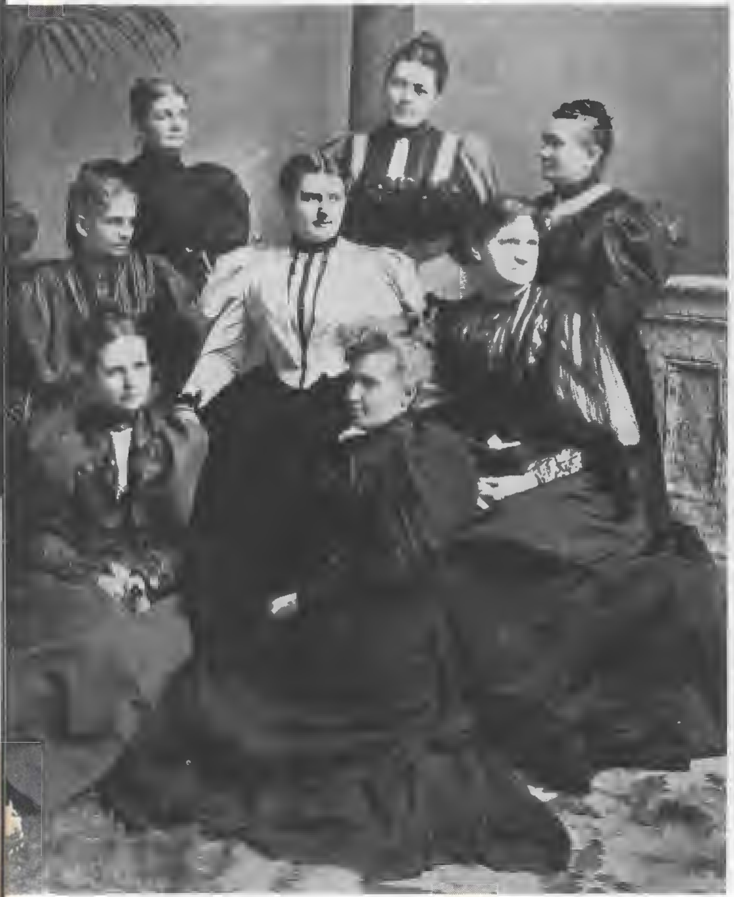
An earlier model helped to win recognition for the Textile Machine Works at Philadelphia's Sesqui-Centennial

The Textile Machine Works has never hesitated to attempt any manufacturing problem, no matter how intricate, in its chosen fields of operation. The fact that practically every product has achieved eventual success is not only a tribute to the two men who founded the firm, but bears witness to the high standards of workmanship of all of its employees.



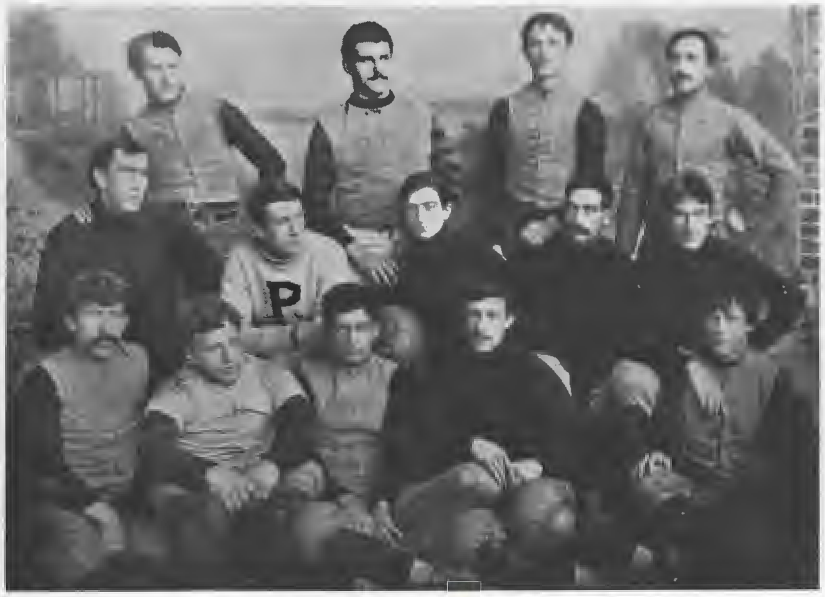
Brown Bros.

A clutch technique was still in use in 1897



Brown Bros.

Mrs. Cleveland and the wives of the President's Cabinet, in dress typical of that day



Culver

Even football vests used braided cord

Brown Bros.

Women of the athletic type were among the earliest to advocate dress reform

# CHAPTER 5

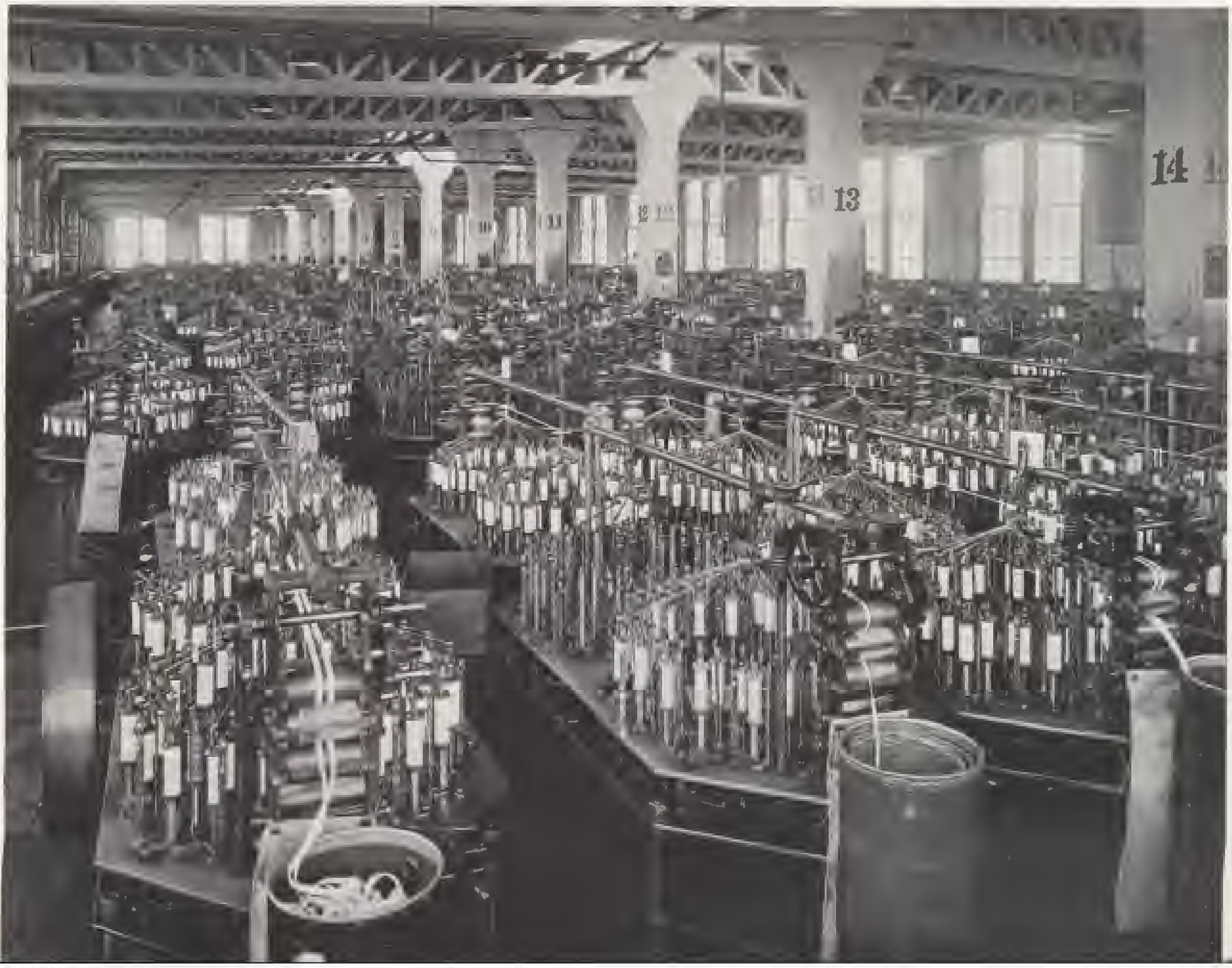
## NARROW FABRIC COMPANY

The Narrow Fabric Company could claim a proud heritage when it was born with the new century. "The art of braiding," said the Textile Machine Works in the introduction to one of its early catalogs, "in its most primitive form dates back to the very dawn of civilization. It is as old as the art of weaving, and very likely preceded it."

Twigs were entwined into mats, and fibers were fashioned into simple textures, and the art was handed down with little improvement until the braiding machine was invented about the middle of the 18th century. Then, even before a patent was granted to Thomas Walford of Manchester in 1748, on a machine for making braids, the industry was firmly established in Barmen, Germany. The art was highly diversified by the time the Wyomissing partners entered the field in late 1899, with a battery of machines to supply brush braid.

946 Court Street, Reading

Where the Narrow Fabric Company began operations



Braiding machine department in the Narrow Fabric Company's early quarters

A firm of New York distributors found steady demand for the new product, which they received in bulk from the Textile Machine Works. Harry Feder, who negotiated the arrangement, entered more and more into the affairs of the Company, and finally became interested financially at the time of incorporation, becoming the first President of the Narrow Fabric Company.

Within a year it became necessary for the new business to have more room than the plant could spare, and temporary quarters were rented in Reading at 946 Court Street until a new building could be constructed. At first the Narrow Fabric Company was put to it to keep abreast of other braid manufacturers, for many were growing rapidly, but at no time was there any serious difficulty in finding business. Flat silk shoelaces became very popular in this period of great "hair rats" and the "Merry Widow Waltz," and helped to build up a volume of business that required still more expansion.

A modern concrete building was planned for the purpose, and erected near the other buildings of the Textile Machine Works. First of its type in the United States, this building was constructed of reinforced concrete girders, beams, and risers cast separately on the ground and assembled after seasoning. In 1905 it was completed, and its third and fourth floors were immediately occupied by the Narrow Fabric Company.

Dragging skirts were still so much of a nuisance that the "Acme Skirt Lifter" was being advertised—an invention designed to enable a lady to nego-

The Narrow Fabric Building, completed September 1914

Temporary building at Front and Buttonwood Streets, Reading

Mr. Harry Feder

The boys of the Narrow Fabric Company a quarter of a century ago. The following are still with the Company:
Clarence Maurer
George Zerr
Carl F. Meyer
Edward Klinger
Howard Klein
Russell Wieder

tiate a street crossing or to waltz without too much preoccupation—but impatience was beginning to manifest itself. It was well that brush binding was not the only product; the Company was already turning out a respectable list of items. This policy of diversification was further built up by Howard M. Fry, of Reading, who entered the firm as a partner on February 13, 1907, and assumed the duties of General Manager and Secretary.

The personnel was again strengthened on September 1, 1909, when Max Mittendorff, friend of the two partners in the New York days, was also received into partnership and became Superintendent of the Narrow Fabric Company. About two years later Mr. Feder withdrew from the Company.

Mr. Mittendorff's connection with the company continued until his death in 1930, and for more than twenty years his efficient and purposeful services were united with those of Mr. Fry in harmonious coöperation.

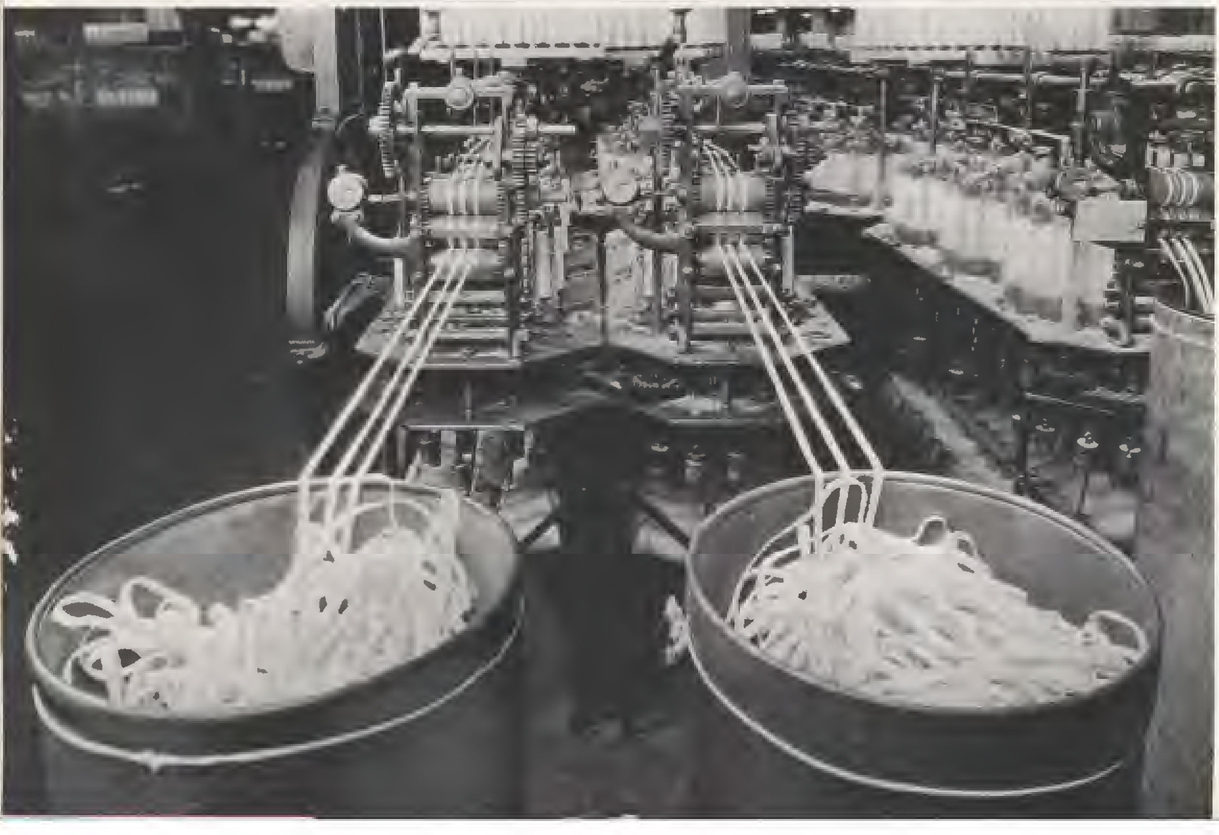
Various products became leaders temporarily only to be displaced by others that caught the public fancy, among them a shoelace which sold in great quantities. Modifications of it followed until the silk shoelace had its wave of popularity and reached a high point in December, 1909, when a single chain of shoe stores placed an order for a carload.

For a time, as the Company continued to develop more products, it made some of them on looms, but this branch of the business was discontinued. In 1909, when additional space was required, the fourth floor of the Tragle

The building erected by the Narrow Fabric Company in 1920

Mr. Howard M. Fry

Mr. Max Mittendorff



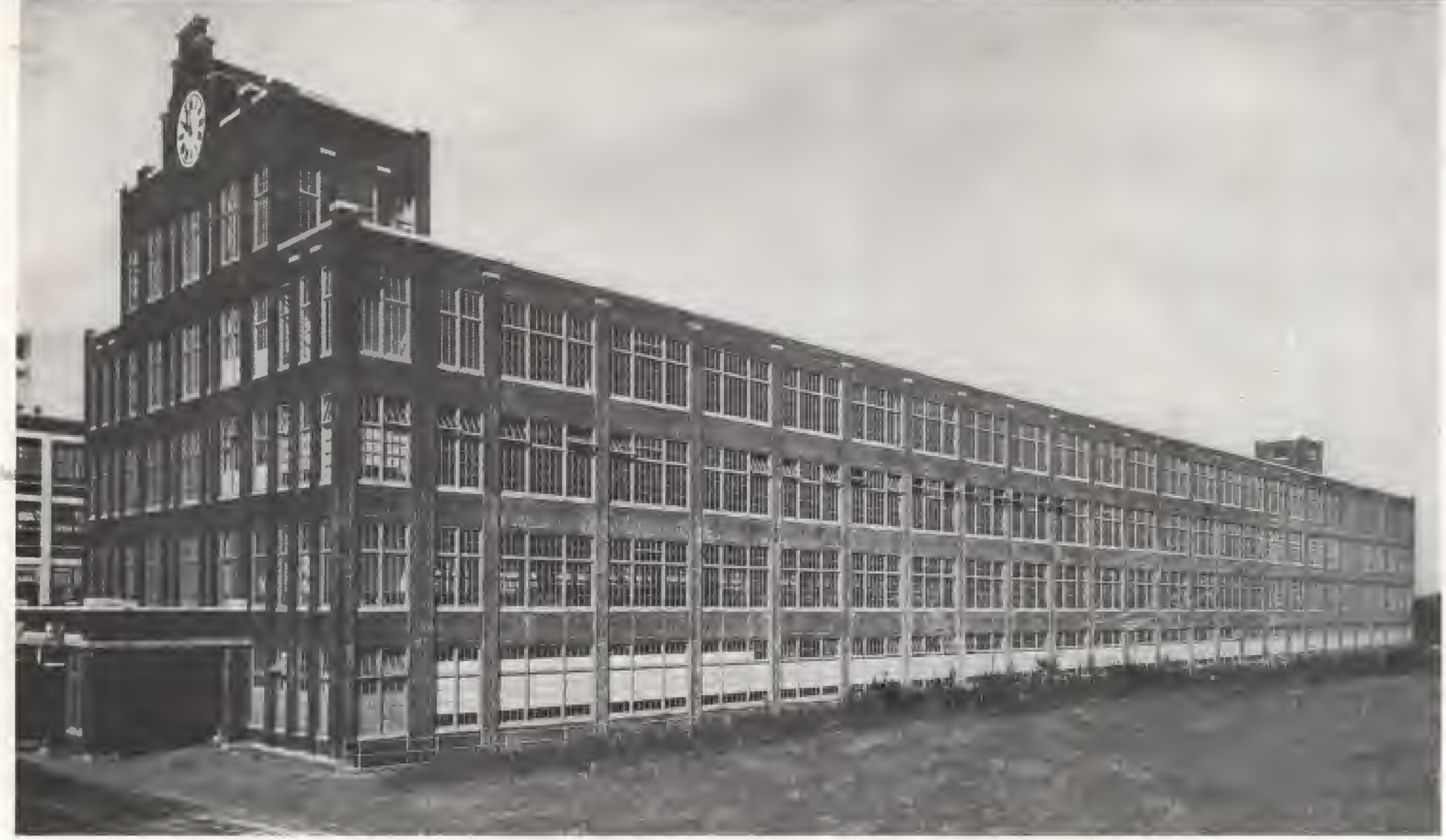
Making elastic braid, a staple through many years

Building at Fifth and Court Streets, Reading, was rented, and it was occupied for a number of years. During this period the Company began to give more attention to sales in addition to production. Offices were established strategically for wide distribution.

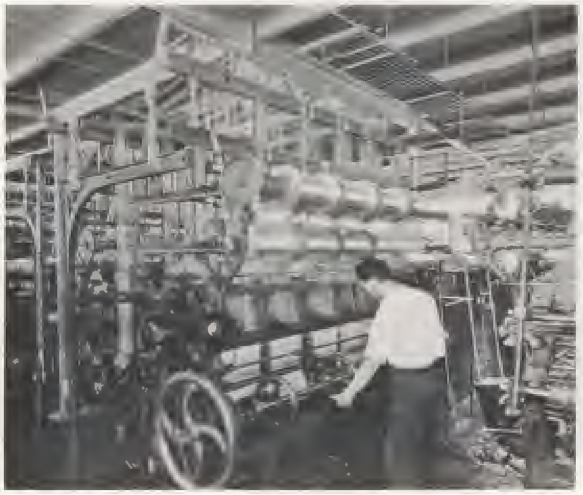
The braiding business continued to spread until it filled the entire building in which it started, and a new structure was planned. This building lay in line with one occupied by the Berkshire Knitting Mills. It was taken over in 1914, none too soon to help take care of still more products that were being added to the line. Rick rack, elastic braid, and a number of wartime braids were responsible for rapid growth through the next few years. The Lady Duff Gordon military styles for women were followed by orders for gas mask braid, service hat cords, breeches laces, bed roll and sack tie braids, and other military products in quantities that kept the machines more than busy.

Between actual war orders and the heavy demand on regular lines, a steadily increasing volume of business was maintained. During these years of war prosperity the management strengthened a relationship of mutual confidence between employer and employee by sharing the profits.

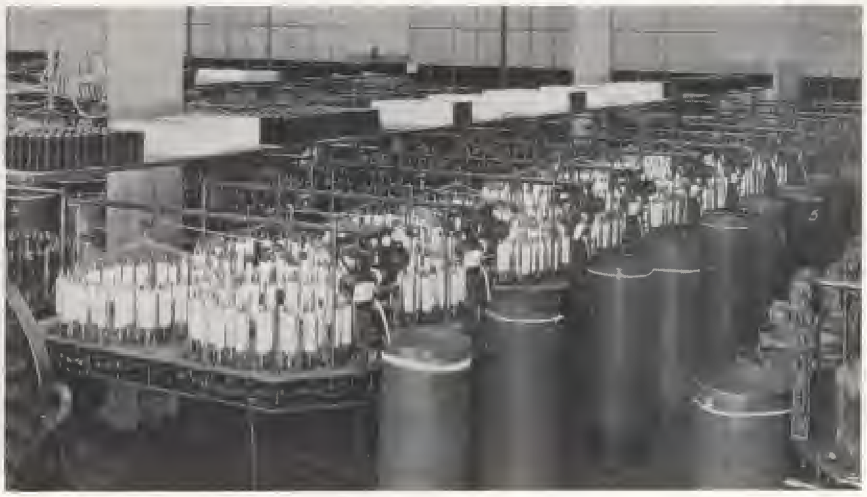
In 1918 the old Richmond Radiator plant at Front and Buttonwood Streets, Reading, was purchased by the Narrow Fabric Company, and after very extensive alterations and improvements was occupied as a braiding mill for making Cluny and Filet laces.



The building erected by the Narrow Fabric Company in 1923

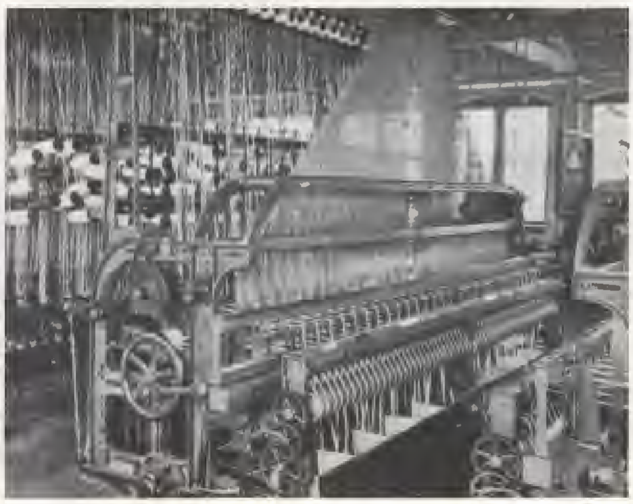


Raschel machine



Braiding machines making shoelace braids

Where bias bindings are made

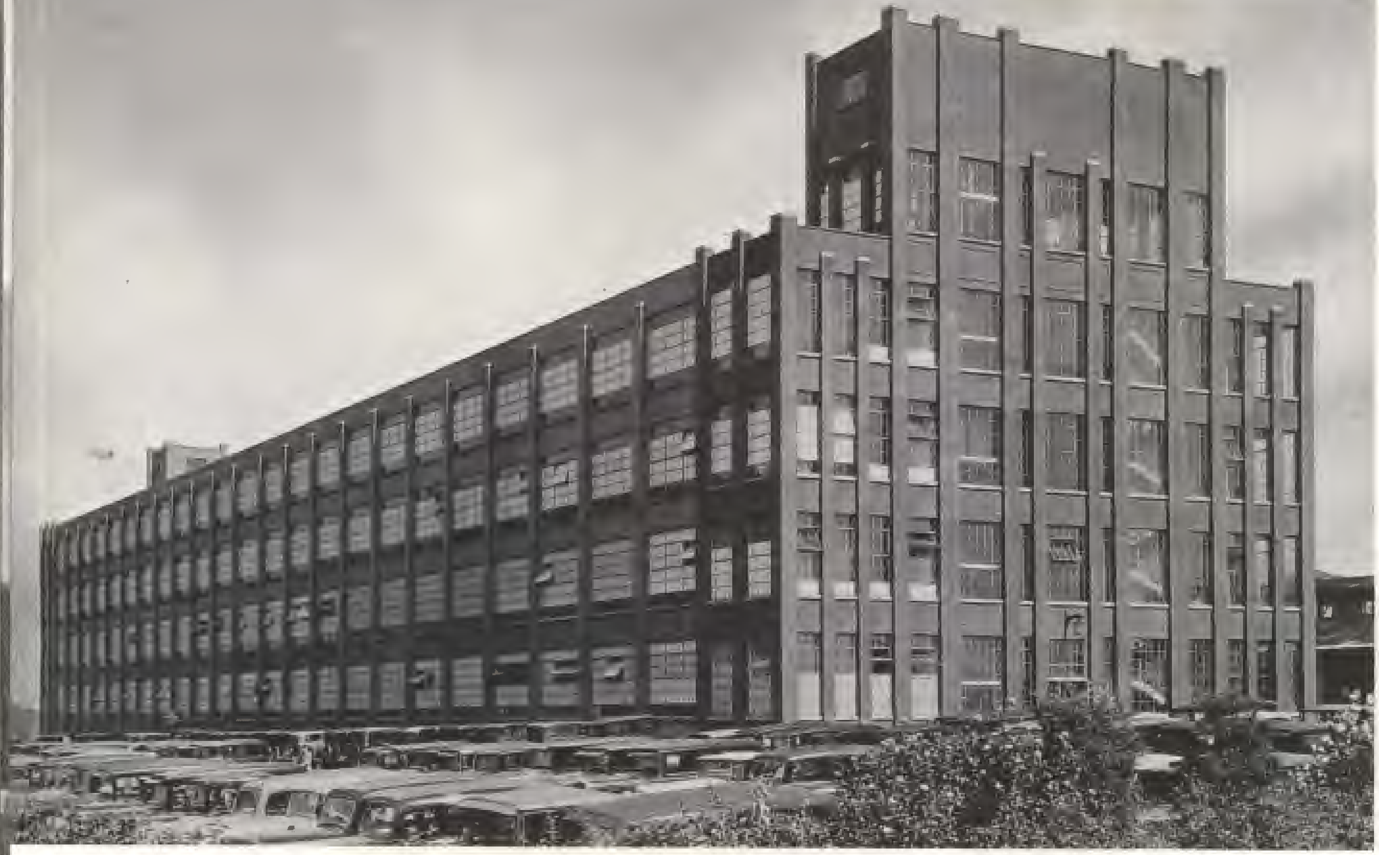


The Loom Department

In 1919 it became necessary once more for the Company to have more space in Wyomissing, and it moved a short distance eastward into a new and much larger building, turning over the concrete structure to the Berkshire Knitting Mills. During the early twenties, styles were replacing each other with great rapidity, and sales continued to increase. In consequence, another building was erected in 1923, adjoining the 1919 structure, and the Narrow Fabric Company moved into it. The Company brought into this new home the Cluny and Filet lace braiding that had been housed temporarily in Reading, so that all departments of the Industries were finally on their own tract of Wyomissing ground. The present building, parallel to the previous two, was occupied in 1928. In these later moves, as in earlier ones, the older quarters were transferred to the Berkshire Knitting Mills.

Following these developments, the death of Mr. Mittendorff on December 3, 1930, terminated his long and useful service.

While many braiding businesses have confined themselves to limited fields that have suffered from the whims of fashion, the Narrow Fabric Company has consistently followed a policy of diversification. It has abandoned products of waning popularity and with equal readiness has adopted others as they have come into favor. It has, in fact, even anticipated such changes through careful study of style trends, depending upon its own investigations as well as the best available services.



Narrow Fabric Company, 1936

Narrow Fabric Company office

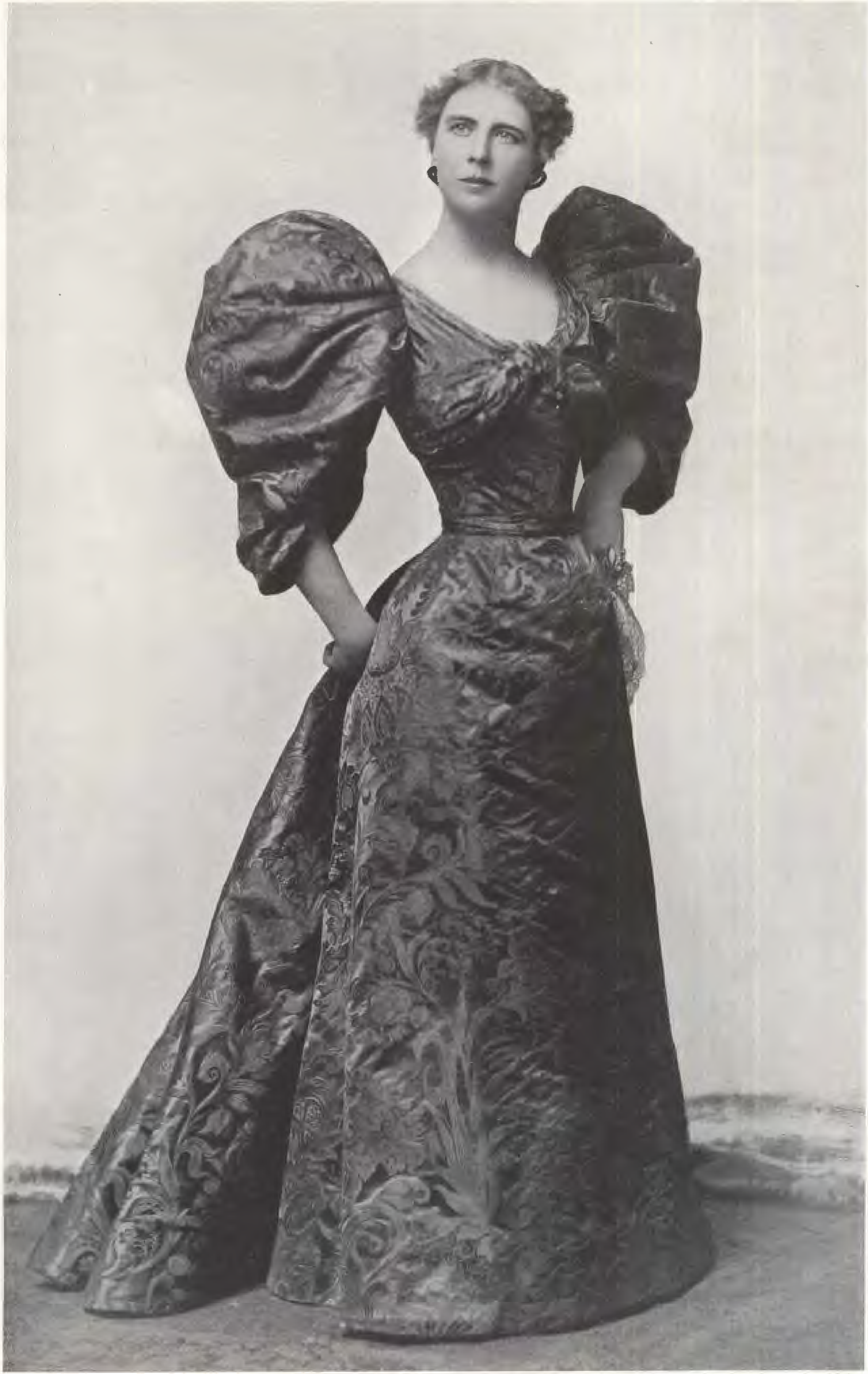
Machines to measure, cut, tip and count shoelaces

Bobbins that make lace

Narrow Fabric Company Garage

Coincident with product research, the Company has perfected its distribution methods, not hesitating to abandon an established policy nor to pioneer in a new one. Its production methods have made use of the most up-to-date mechanical principles.

While these successful business policies have been a matter of gratification to the employees and the executives alike, both point with even more pride to a long and unbroken record of cooperation—the Company's finest tradition.



Culver

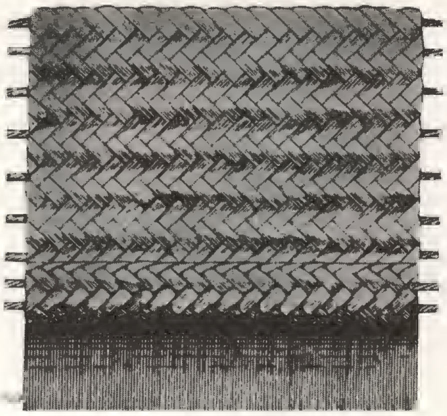
The more voluminous the skirt, the more brush braid

# CHAPTER 6

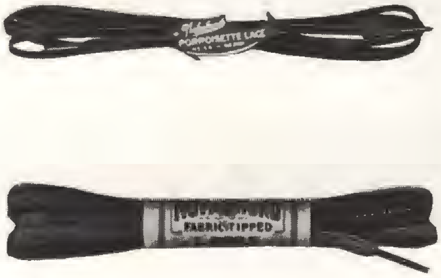
## NARROW FABRIC COMPANY PRODUCTS

It was Dame Fashion's frown, compelling dainty feet and ankles to hide demurely behind voluminous skirts, that made the need for brush braids and brought about the establishment of the Narrow Fabric Company. When her frown gave way to the first favoring smile, and toes and insteps began to peep out cautiously, she merely transferred her approval from one of the Company's products to another. The new item was an ingenious new lace for shoes; there was a narrowed tubular part to fit into the eyelets but the ends were flat and wide to make a handsome bow. This novel design led to the name "Nufashond," which became so popular that it was forthwith adopted for an entire line of products which had been growing up.

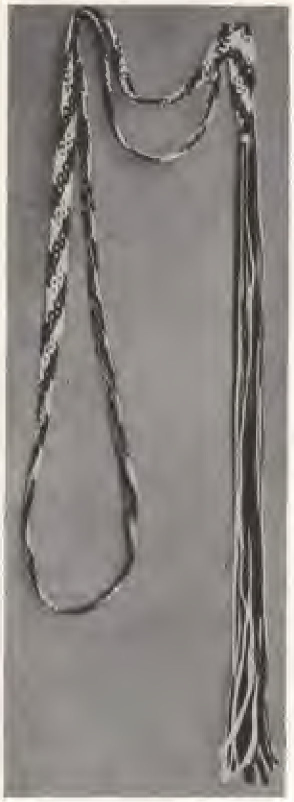
Mindful of these early developments, the Narrow Fabric Company has kept a watchful eye on the fickle Dame's moods and has remained in her graces



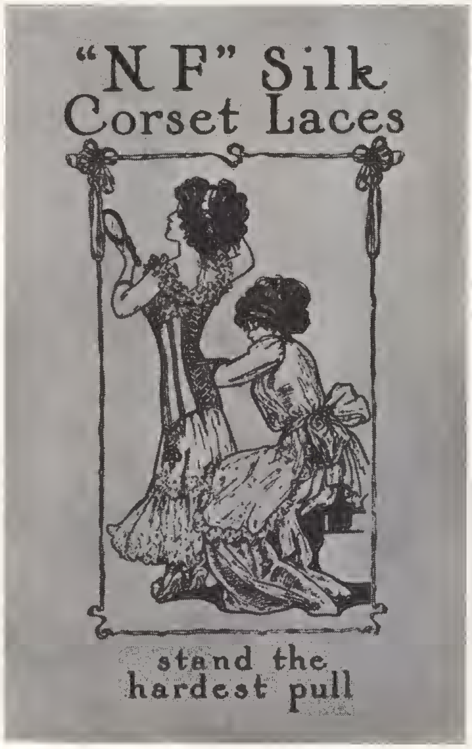
Brush braid



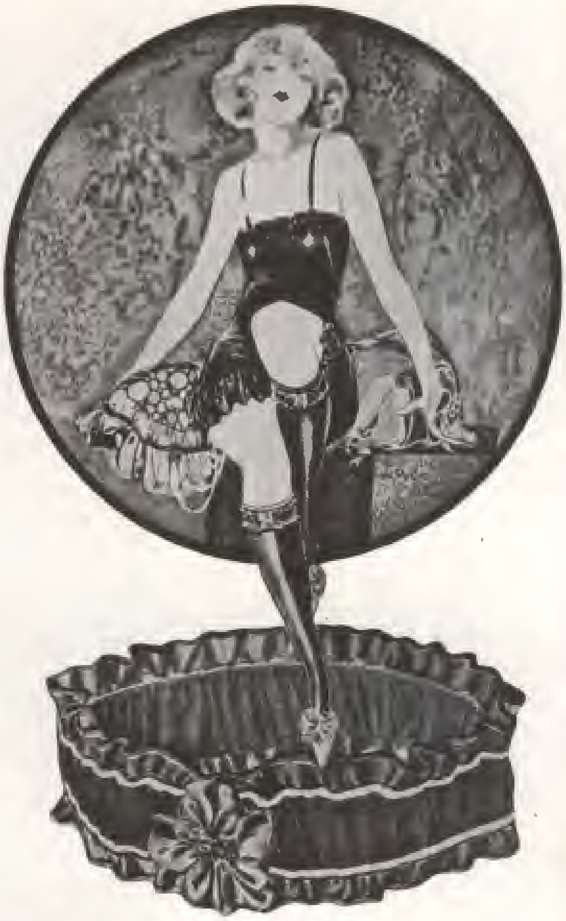
"Nufashond" shoelace



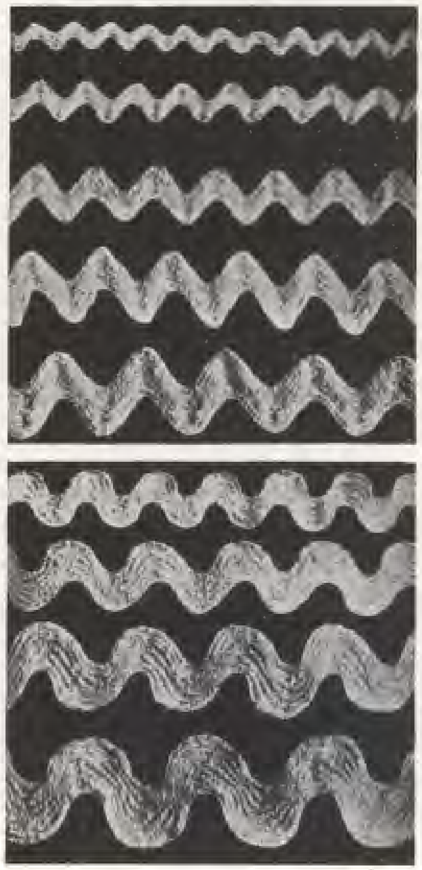
Soutache



Corset lace



Garter elastic



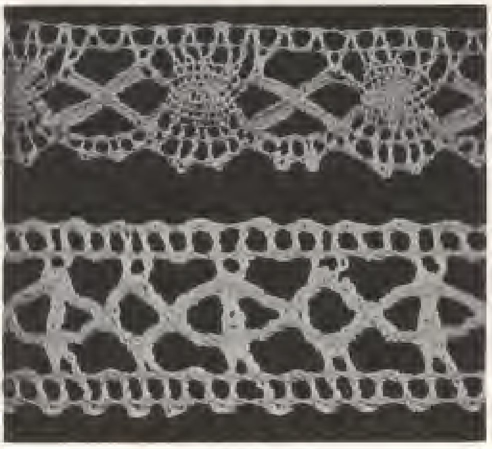
Rick rack

consistently. Brush braids and many other products had their day and went into oblivion, but when one narrow fabric becomes outmoded, two new ones take its place. There was a great demand for 8, 9 and 10 ligne underwear strings, which were among the first products of the Narrow Fabric Company. In some cases they were produced on a commission basis from yarns furnished by distributors in New York and Philadelphia. Shredded whalebone, known as "Bestobone," for reinforcing ridiculously high collars of sheer material, came and went. A little later, wire-stiffened millinery trimmings were the vogue. Endless miles of corset strings served their purpose and were forgotten. In their place came many dependable staples, also new specialties in greater variety and number than ever, such as elastic braid first successfully produced by the Narrow Fabric Company, elastic tops for stockings, and recently passementeries.

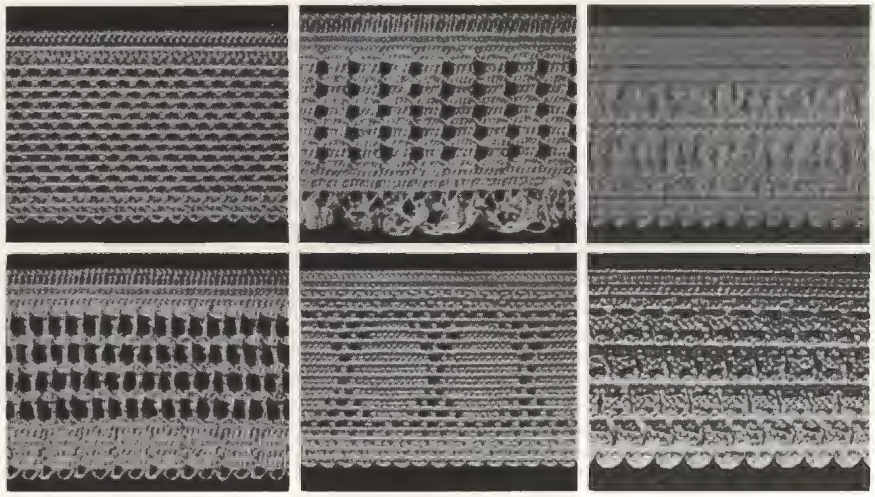
So numerous are the narrow fabrics now required to fill people's needs that they must be thought of by groups. What are practically six distinct businesses now constitute the Narrow Fabric Company.

The regular production of shoelaces is in itself a huge industry. The standard varieties were among the earliest braids made by the Company and have continued year after year with a steady and dependable output. They are turned out in labelled pairs automatically.

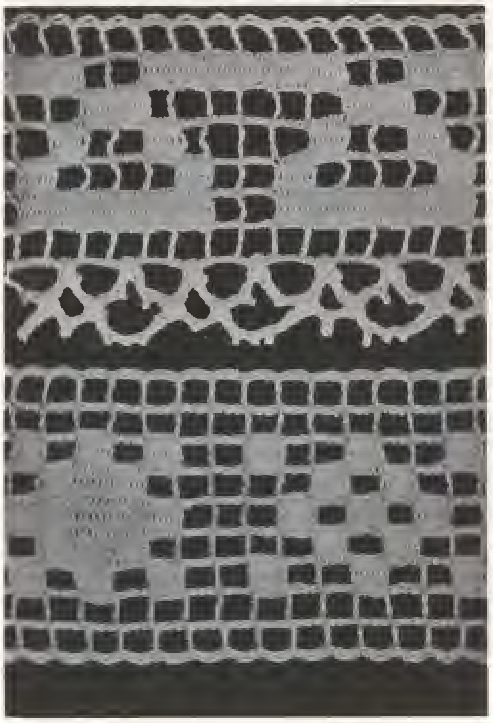
A second department has strayed far from the braiding principle. In it, the processes are sewing, rolling, cutting and folding; the raw materials are



Cluny lace



La-ce-lastic hosiery top



Filet lace

Hosiery top elastic

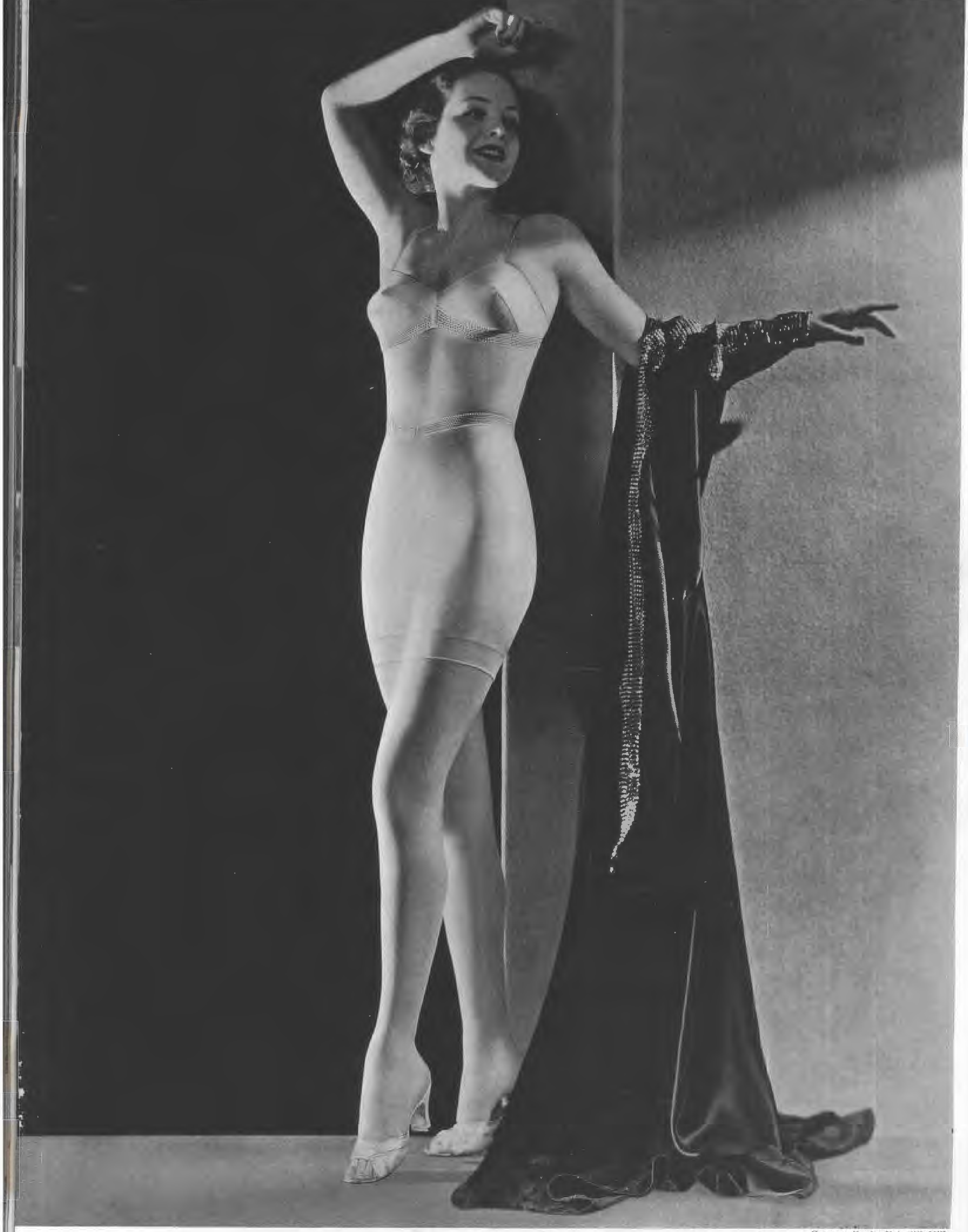
lawns and percales; the product is a gay assortment of bias bands and trims neatly done up and packaged for retailing.

Contrasting with these are the elastic materials, some with two-way stretch, made on various types of warp knitting machines. These rayon and rubber fabrics for foundation garments go to large corset manufacturers who use them as the raw material for their products.

A fourth well-established department is made up of elastic braids. From the time when the Narrow Fabric Company pioneered in developing this new type of elastic material, these braids have been the leading staples in the line of "Nufashond" products and have helped to make the name known wherever underwear, garters and hosiery supporters are used.

A product that is most amazing to the uninitiated comprises the Cluny and Filet laces that are made on braiding machines. Though these mechanisms are of unusual types, they are but modifications of the original braiding principle. Nevertheless they produce a steady output of laces of unbelievably intricate designs, destined to go into curtains, linens, bedspreads and apparel.

A sixth department offers dainty trimmings of permanent finish Swiss organdies. What with pleated frillings and rufflings and shirrings and puffings, plain colors and printed and flocked designs, finally with combinations of organdy and braids and a variety of related trimmings, there would seem to be little left for a woman to desire as aids to her handicraft.



Courtesy Vanity Fair Silk Mills

"Nufashond" trimming makes underwear comfortable and attractive

"Nufashond" products are in every room of the house. Bedspreads and dresser scarfs and boudoir lamps have their trimmings. Bias tape animals appear in the nursery. The bathroom curtains boast frilling and the towels reveal rick rack. Down in the kitchen, aprons are made attractive with trimmings. Luncheon sets and napkins and bridge cloths require a bit of finish and again "Nufashond" products come to the aid of the housewife. Thus, the Narrow Fabric Company serves the whole family.

Lace elastic—a product of the lace braiding machines—is now being used as the means of providing full-fashioned hosiery with braided elastic top. A single garment is now the joint product of the two types of textile machinery made in the Wyomissing Industries.

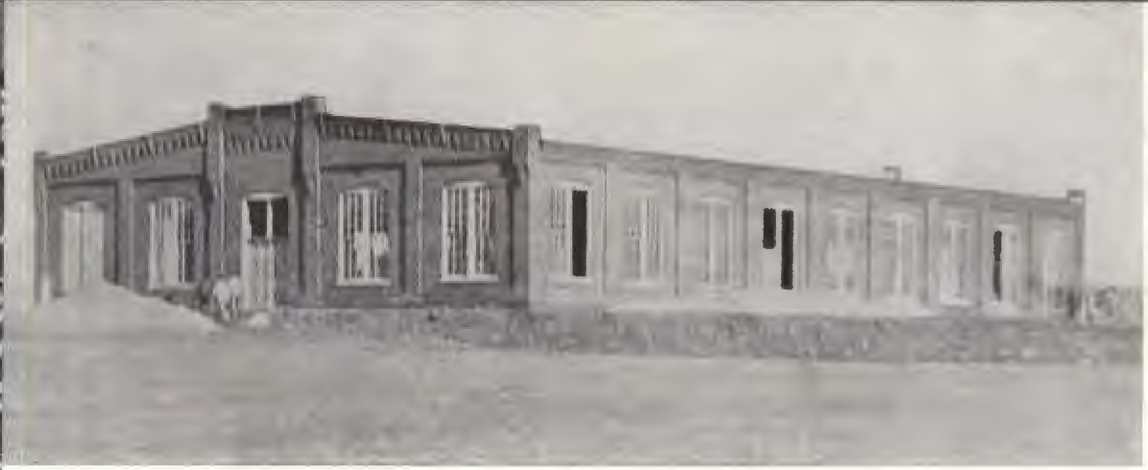
KNITTING MILLS

# CHAPTER 7

## BERKSHIRE KNITTING MILLS

What started as a side line of the Textile Machine Works—the full-fashioned hosiery machine—became its most important product. Similarly, what was once just a means of perfecting that machine—an experimental department—grew into a separate business which has become the largest full-fashioned hosiery plant in the world.

It was apparent to the partners in the Textile Machine Works, perfecting the early full-fashioned machine, that only actual working conditions constituted a real test of its operating success. That involved the production of hosiery, which in turn had to appear well and wear well to demonstrate the value of the machine that produced it. Since this made considerable knitting necessary, it seemed logical to enjoy the advantage of actual knitting mill conditions and to undertake the regular production and marketing of hosiery.

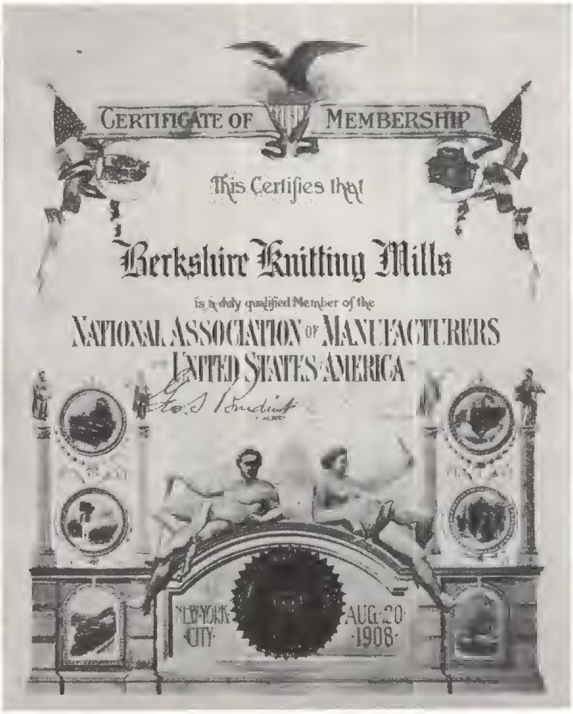


Terrey Building—taken over by the Berkshire Knitting Mills, 1907

Mr. Gustav Oberlaender

Brown Bros.

In the early suffrage days, when silk stockings were a luxury



CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP

This Certifies that

Berkshire Knitting Mills

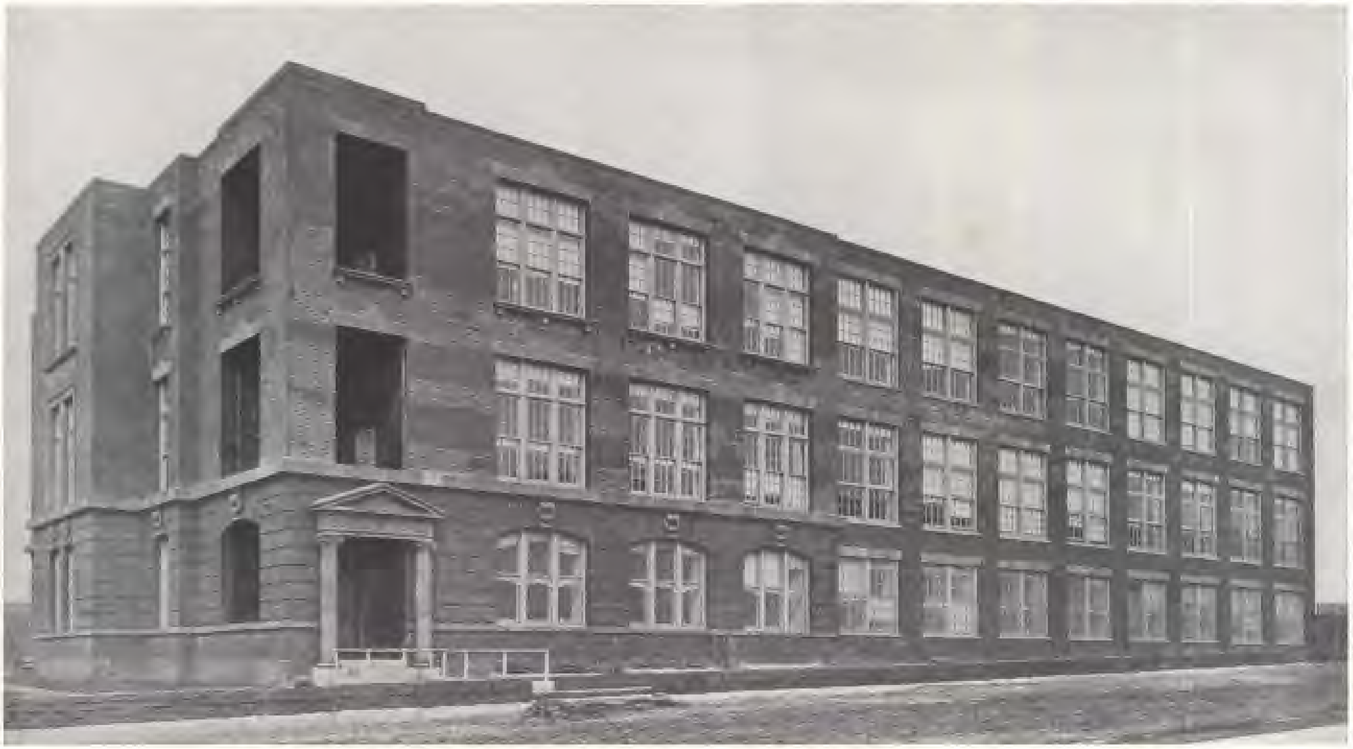
is a duly qualified Member of the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS

UNITED STATES AMERICA

NEW-YORK CITY

AUG. 20 1908

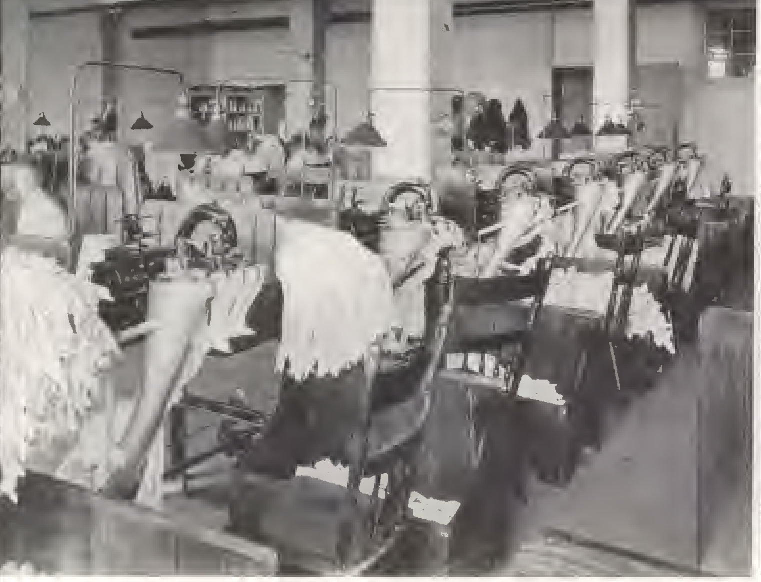


The first building erected by the Berkshire Knitting Mills—occupied in 1908

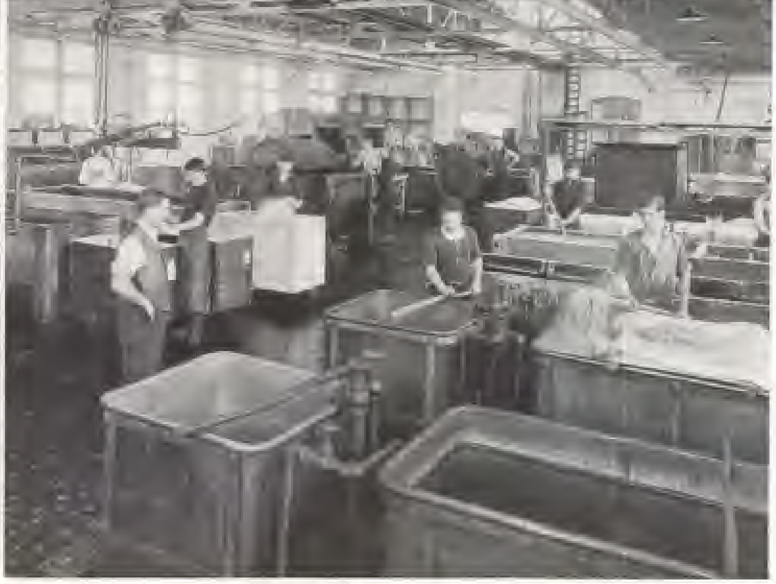
Machines that had already been operating were therefore made a nucleus for a separate business that began its existence in 1906. It was incorporated on July 12th as the Berkshire Knitting Mills, Inc. Mr. Gustav Oberlaender, one of the group of young Germans who had become acquainted with Mr. Thun and Mr. Janssen in New York before the partners went to Reading, was brought to Wyomissing, taken into partnership, and charged with the management of the Berkshire Knitting Mills.

Temporary accommodations were found for the new Company in the first and second floors of a new building that was shared with the Narrow Fabric Company, the time-honored "Number Five" that was later to become the Administration Building of the Textile Machine Works. This arrangement was almost immediately found to be unsuitable. A small structure nearby, known as the Terrey Building, was acquired, and a three-story building was erected in 1908 on ground just east of the Textile Machine Works group. In 1910 two additional stories were added to this structure, which was the Berkshire Knitting Mills' first permanent building.

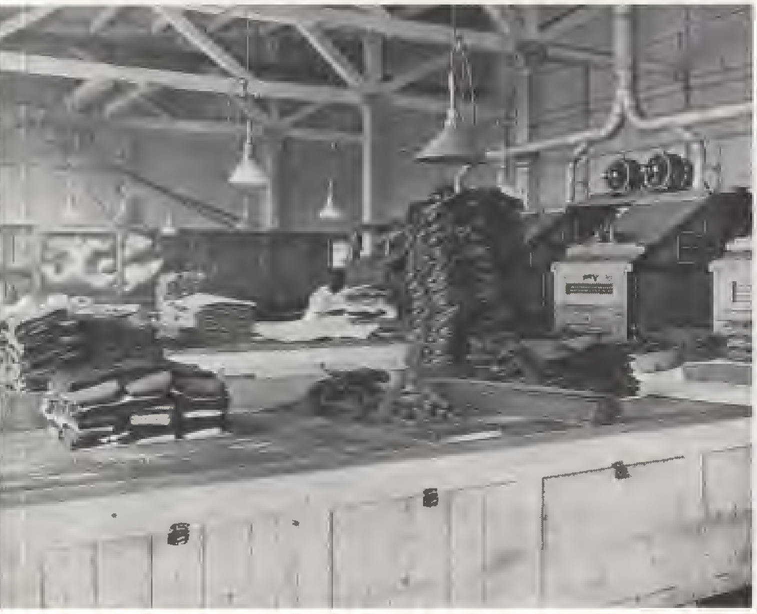
In this plant the Company knitted full-fashioned cotton stockings, many of them black ingrain with lavender tops, which were then popular. Though silk hosiery was still a luxury, its glossy sheen was seen often enough to cause demand for a good substitute. The dullness of cotton had to be transformed, therefore, by heavy mercerizing. For the same reason, yarn was run



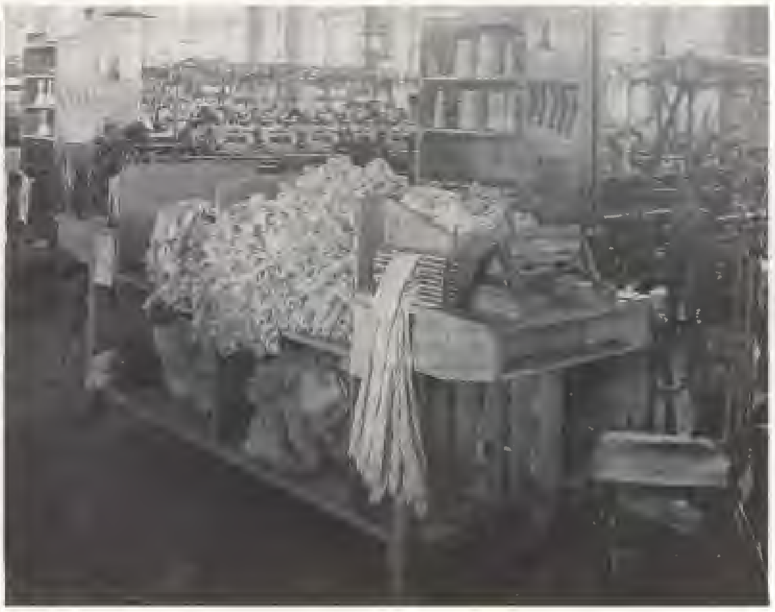
The first looping department



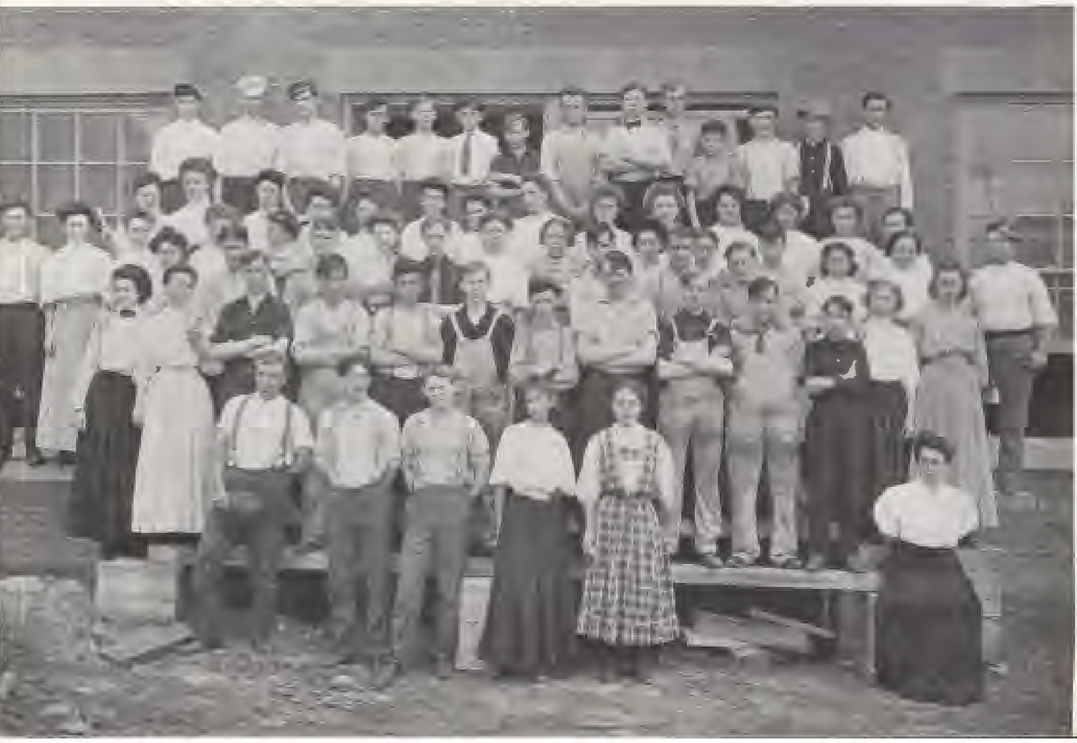
The old dye house



The boarding department of early days



The first topping department

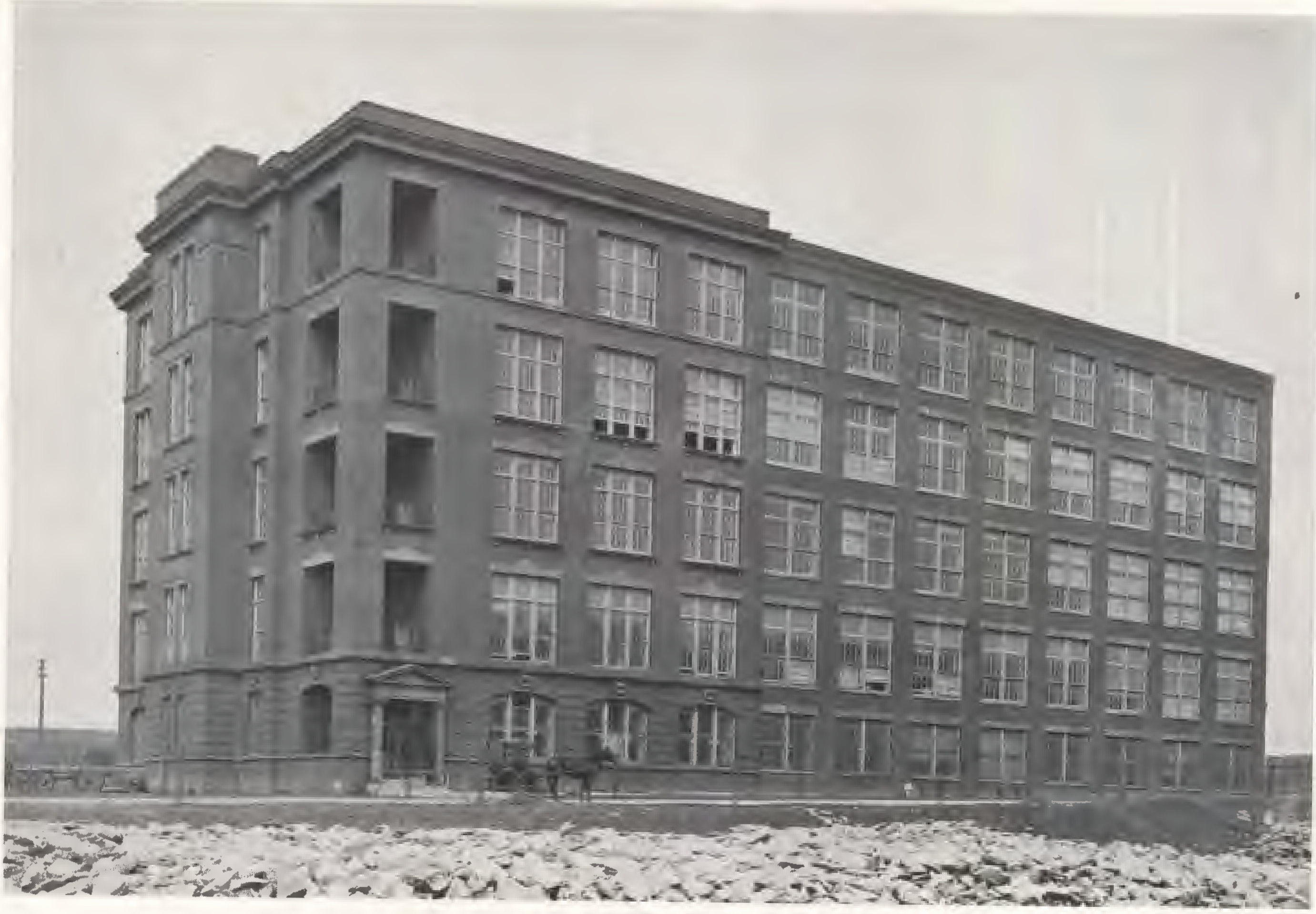


The Berkshire employees of 1908. Eleven of them are still with the Company: Clarence Trump, Earl Dohner, Claude Hoffman, Paul Dunkelberger, Dominic Cornulia, I. B. Whitman, William Angstadt, Robert Armitage, Christian Ortmiller, Martin Kurtz, Herbert Potteiger through rollers to flatten the thread, and waxed with paraffin to give it luster. These were obviously makeshifts, and even then the Berkshire Knitting Mills was experimenting with silk.

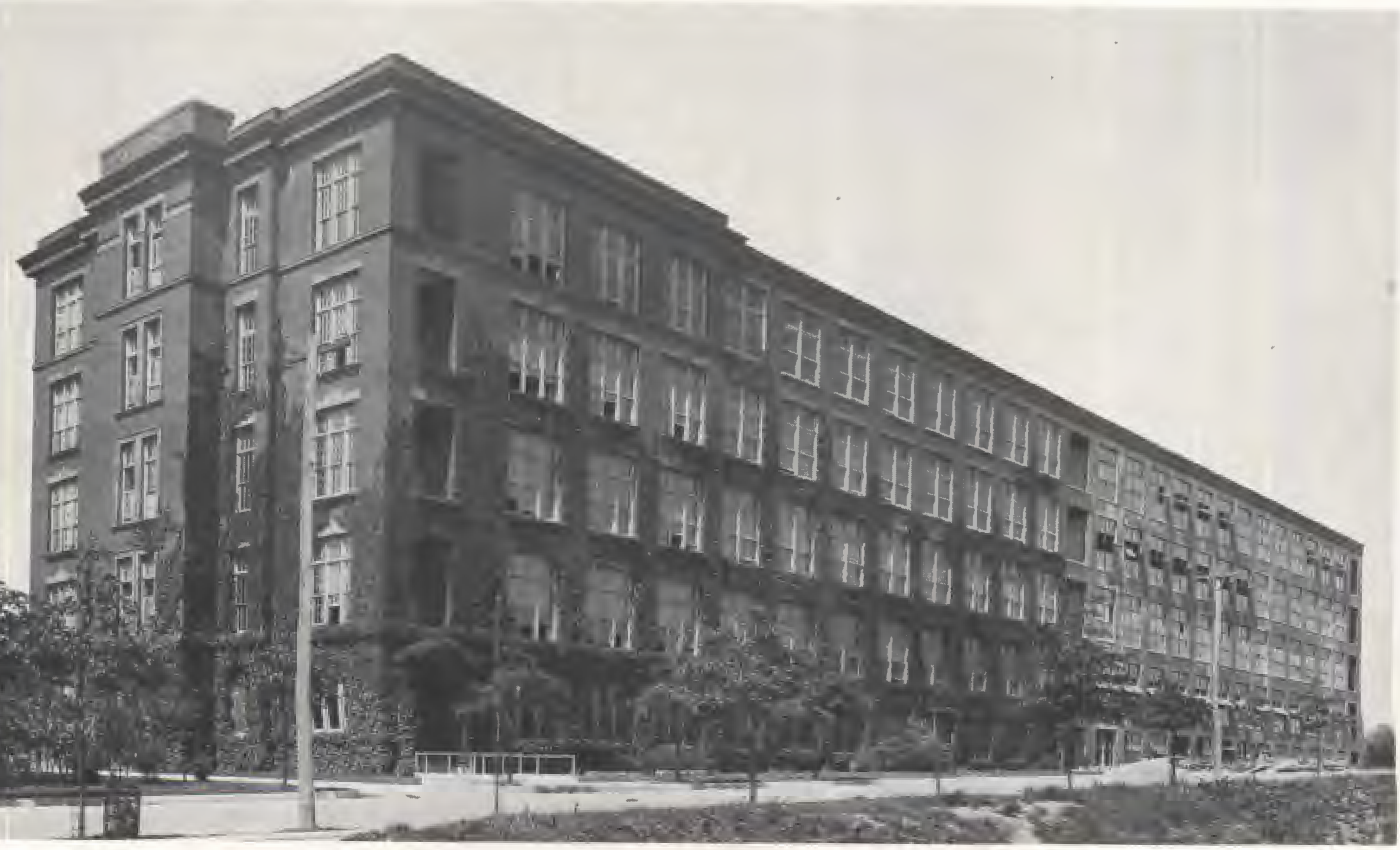
Indications that the finer fabric might some day dominate the market were just beginning to appear, and were certainly not too conclusive even to a trained observer of styles. While there was a widespread appreciation of the advantages and desirable qualities of silk, it was generally associated with extravagance or ostentation. This was gradually overcome as the effect of increasing production was reflected in lower prices.

The trend developed irresistible force in the second decade of the century, with effects that were of far-reaching importance in the hosiery industry. The motion picture was beginning to feature decidedly attractive actresses, and millions of young women in the audiences lost no time in studying how they might acquire more of that attractiveness themselves. By 1914 the fascinating steps of Vernon and Irene Castle had caught the public imagination, and millions of people were learning to dance. In spite of much criticism young women insisted on shorter skirts and more attractive shoes and stockings.

As influences favoring more freedom and better appearance in dress became active, and about the same time the outbreak of the war in Europe strengthened the domestic manufacturing business, the demand for fine hosiery increased rapidly. The Berkshire Knitting Mills took early advantage of the



Two additional floors were added to the original building, 1914

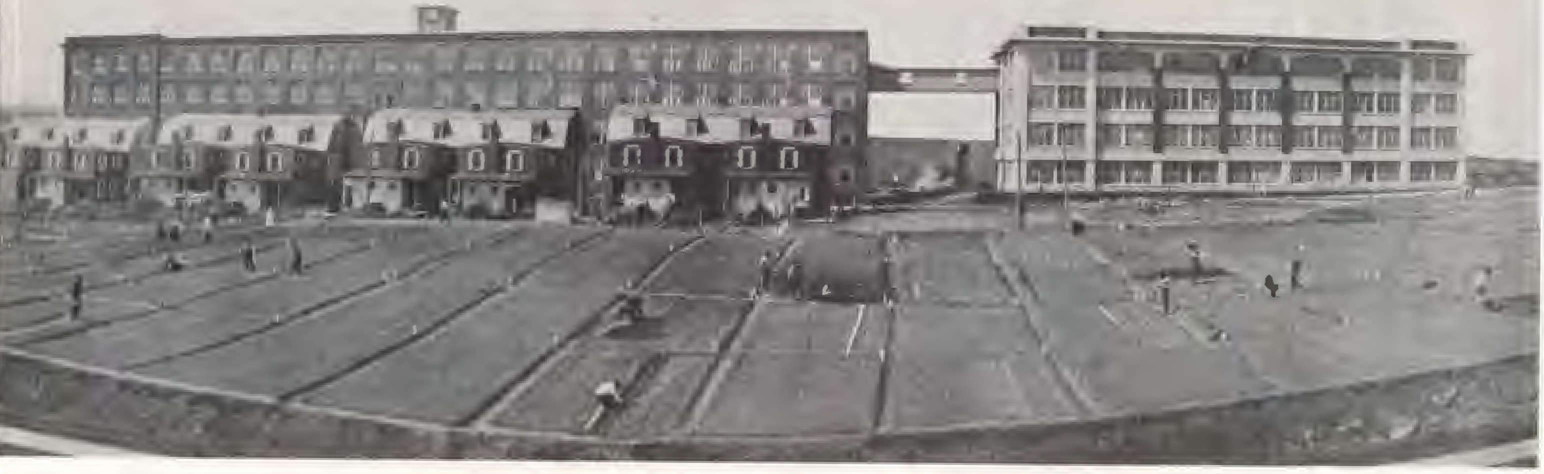


*A second building in line with the first, 1916* changing modes and acted to keep ahead of the demand. The 12,000 square feet of floor space with which production had begun were increased by the end of 1922 to 428,844 square feet.

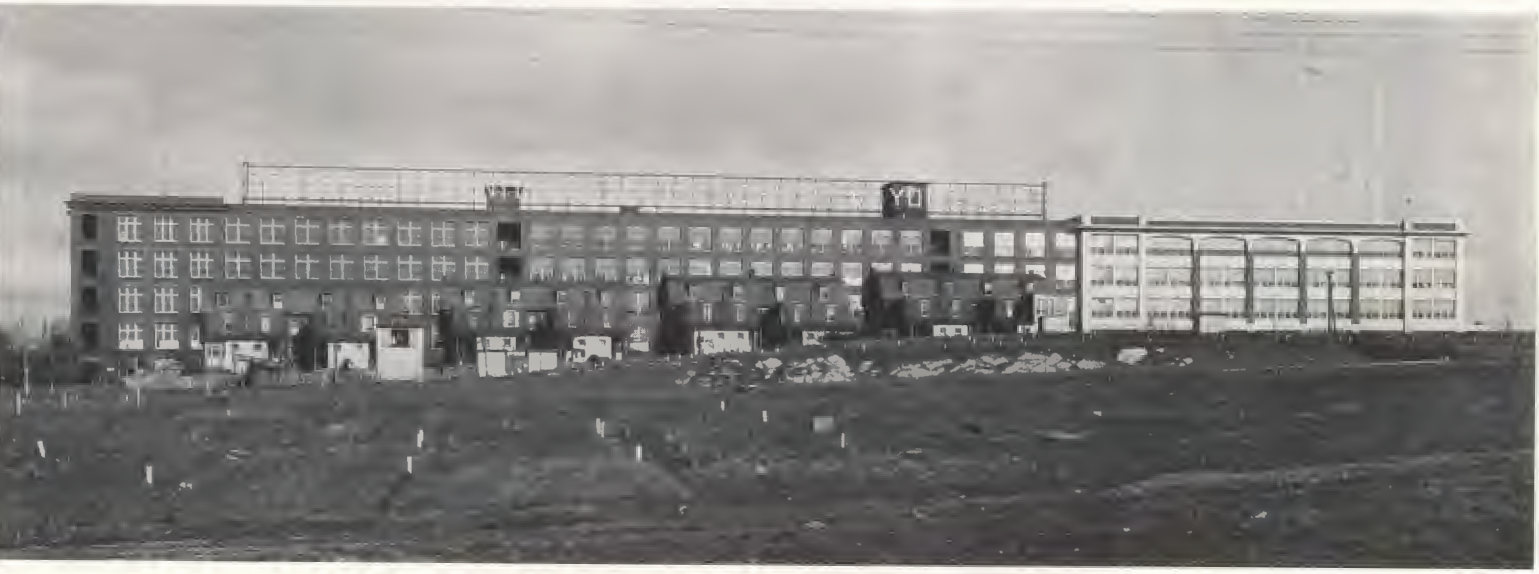
The additions included first an extension to the original building in 1914, for knitting space, and three years later another extension of it that joined it to the first Narrow Fabric Company building. Finally the latter building also was acquired by the Berkshire Knitting Mills in 1920. Parallel to these, there were erected two finishing buildings, one in 1920 and the other in 1922 with a gap between.

While these physical developments were occurring, the Company was making equally impressive progress in other directions. As cotton began to seem out of harmony with the styles, the Company gradually turned to the production of full-fashioned silk hosiery. Most silk hosiery was imported from Europe; it was knitted ingrain or of boiled-off silk. The Berkshire Knitting Mills saw possibilities in knitting from gum silk to reduce the number of operations, and succeeded in developing methods that were practicable. Another innovation of the Wyomissing plant was the establishment of schools in the departments for teaching new employees their trades. This practice not only developed dependable trained help but assisted also in building up a fine spirit.

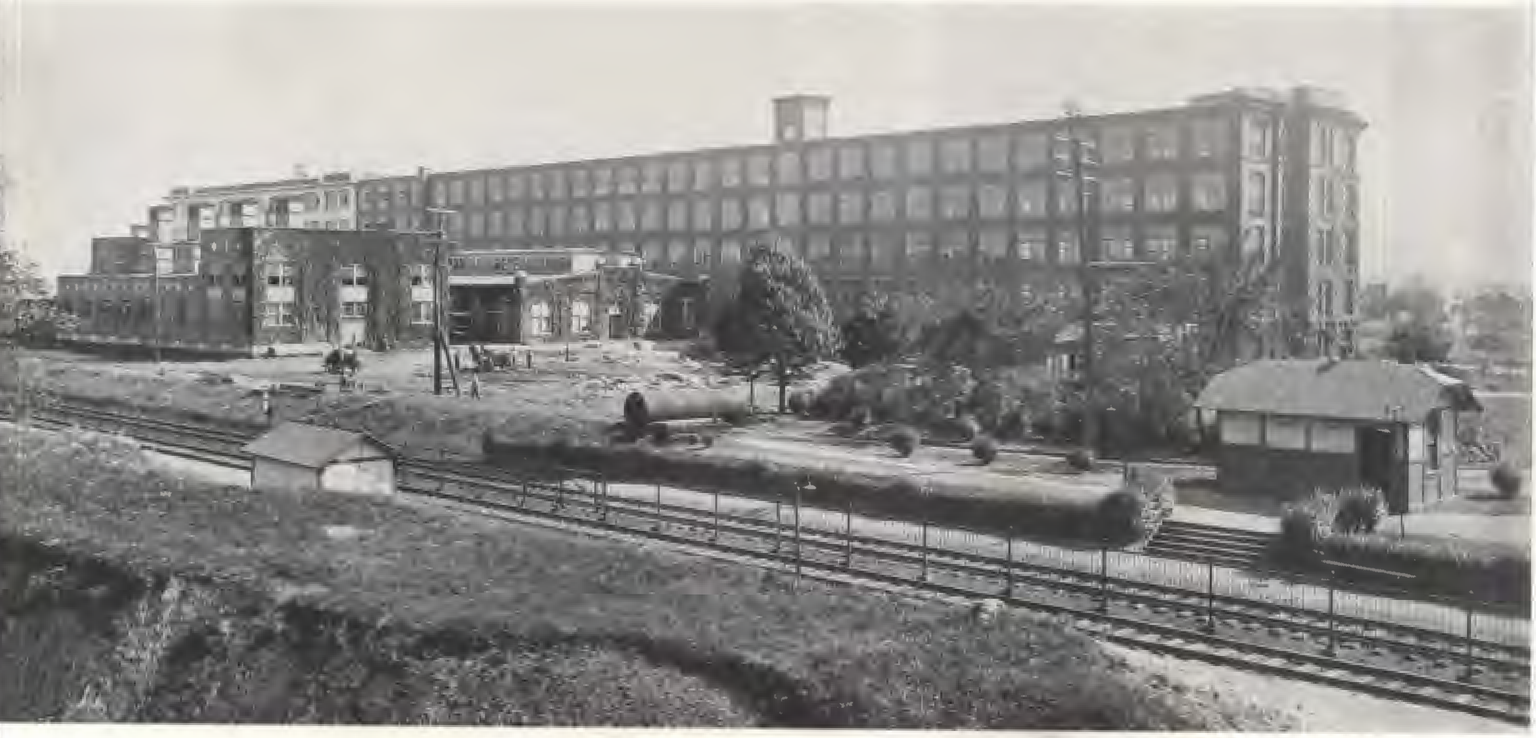
These parallel developments of product, policy, and plant entered a new phase in the nineteen twenties. Suffrage activities had reached their goal



The building at the right was acquired in 1920



An addition was built to fill the gap



A view of the Berkshire Knitting Mills from the north, 1918 with a constitutional amendment. Girls were taking very active part in athletics and other fields of endeavor formerly closed to them. The first Atlantic City Bathing Beauty Contest in 1921 marked a changed public attitude toward the display of feminine charms. Coincident with these influences, a disastrous strike closed many eastern hosiery plants without affecting the Berkshire Knitting Mills. These circumstances and general business conditions added impetus to the Company's rapid progress.

Growth in plant and equipment was accompanied by great increases in personnel and business organization which placed the Company unquestionably in the lead as the world's largest manufacturer of women's hosiery. As a part of this development, a group of buildings was erected in 1924 and 1925 including a general office, two garages, a dispensary, and a large cafeteria. These five form a line parallel to the hosiery buildings and to the south of them. The dispensary and cafeteria were designed to accommodate employees of all three Wyomissing Industries. Each of these two services started in small quarters; the work of the Dispensary began in 1917 and includes general medical, dental, and ocular service; the Cafeteria service dates back to 1920.

Rapid expansion continued during the nineteen twenties. Two more buildings were taken over from the Narrow Fabric Company, one in 1923 and one in 1928, as that Company continued to erect new plants. These are east of the original buildings and are used chiefly for knitting. A dye house was also

Two groups of early Berkshire employees. Those still with the Company are:

Clarence Seidel, John Gehris, William Hoyer, Louis Keener, Warren Bixler, William Angstadt, Irwin Noll, Robert Armitage, William Brenner, Gertrude Werner, Hugo Hemmerich, Laura Glase, Charles Fisher, Charles Hiester, Hans Walbrecker, Donald Eaches, Ralph Miller, Isaac B. Whitman, Ernst Geiss, Walter Dietrich, Emil Richter, Julius Foth, Rudolph Ulrich, Otto Christian, Robert Hiester, Harry Weber, Charles Lorah, Robert Spotts, Allen Evans, William Kauffman, Max Forret

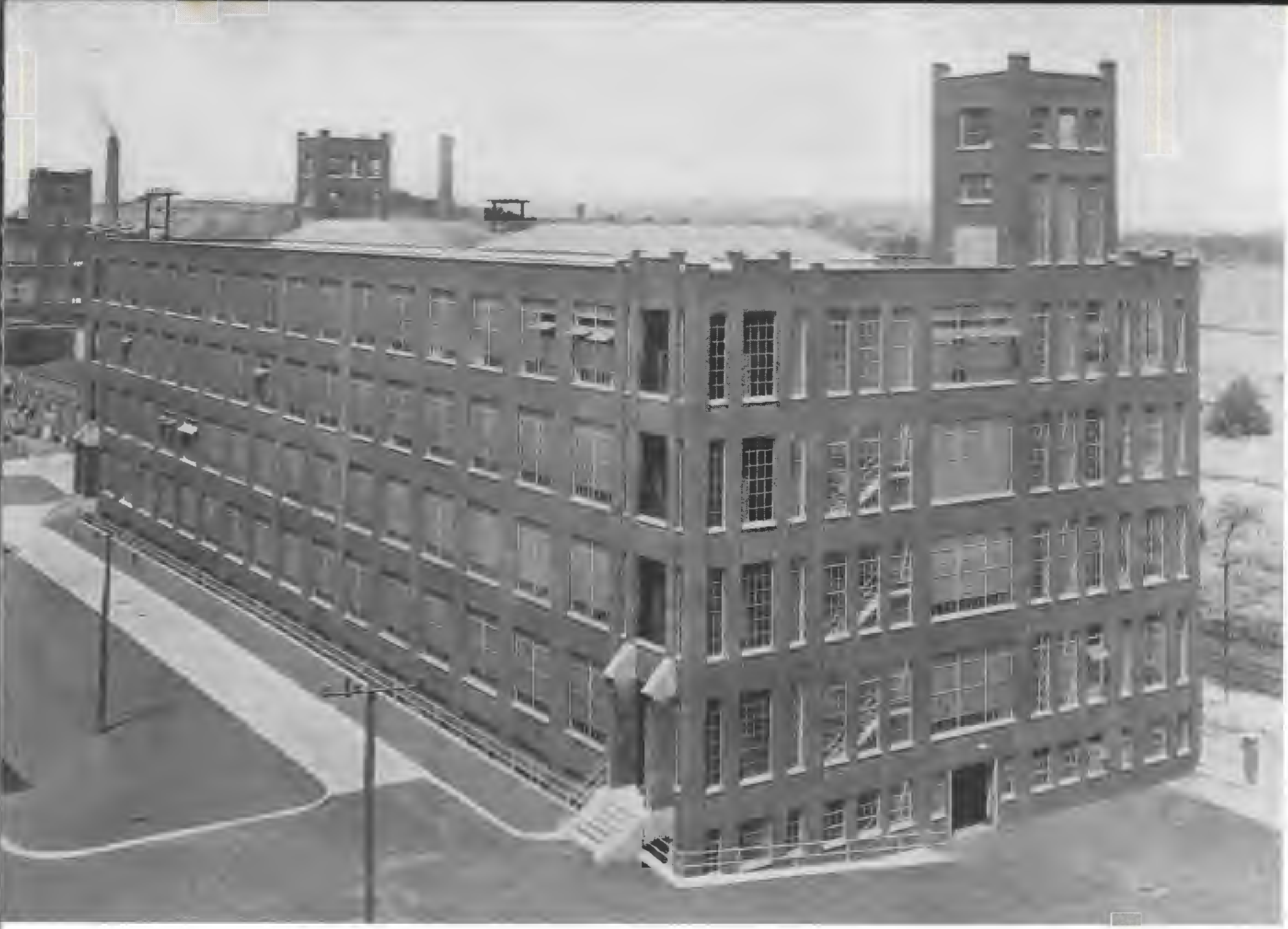
Paul Gehris, Earl Dohner, William Arnold, Herman Eisele, Chas. Seitzinger, Raymond Hassan, Jacob Tobias, David Hill, Leo Langan, Luther D. Gerlach, Charles Raudibaugh, Elwood DeTambel. In the group are also August Ulshoefer (Retired) and Eric Oberlaender (Deceased)

1920—the first finishing building

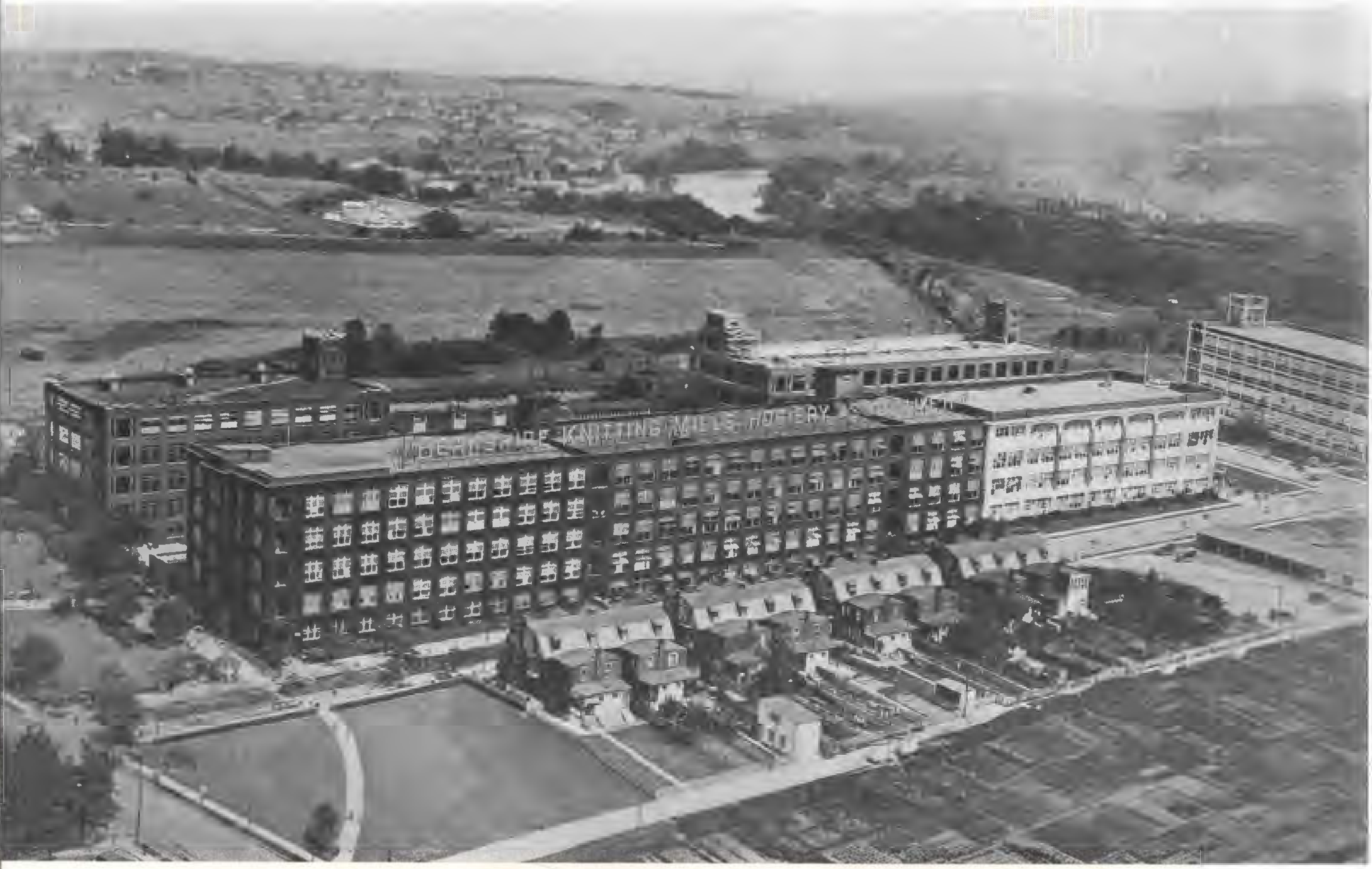
built between the two finishing buildings, in 1929. The period of rapid expansion was accompanied by other changes affecting product and personnel. In 1926 Mr. Oberlaender relinquished his partnership and retired a few years later after a successful business career.

From time to time as new machinery and methods have been evolved by the Textile Machine Works, the Berkshire Knitting Mills has worked out accompanying principles of plant operation for efficiency which have been widely copied by other full-fashioned mills. Straight line operation has always been maintained. From the various knitting floors the work flows together to the looping and seaming departments, located in a separate building, where finishing of the gray goods begins. From there stockings go upward to the Dye House and then proceed downward to the Shipping Department. The Dye House is equipped with rotating closed dyeing machines exclusively, with automatic temperature control devices. All of the operations of the plant have the advantage of the best mechanical aids, many of which are obtained from the parent Company of which the Berkshire Knitting Mills was once a part. The installation of these improvements, together with increasing demand for "Berkshire" hosiery, has necessitated the expansion of the plant to the present total of 1,950,000 square feet of floor space.

Until 1930 its entire output was distributed through jobbers and large selling organizations. Large-quantity dyeings were the rule. The Company



The second Finishing Building, completed 1922



The group of Berkshire buildings in 1922 estimated its production possibilities half a year ahead and allotted to the distributors their share of the hosiery produced. In keeping with the change in economic conditions, the entire sales system was changed in recent years and the Company now sells its hosiery to wholesalers, jobbers, and retailers.

Woman's long struggle to escape the senseless traditions of dress has gradually developed into a firm insistence on the right to be healthy, comfortable and attractive. Well may the Berkshire Knitting Mills take satisfaction from its notable contribution toward this objective.

West Garage, 1925

The office of the Berkshire Knitting Mills, built in 1925, and its interior

Gate House and Telephone Exchange—1926

East Garage, 1925

Most recent Berkshire buildings

Legger

Topping

Footer

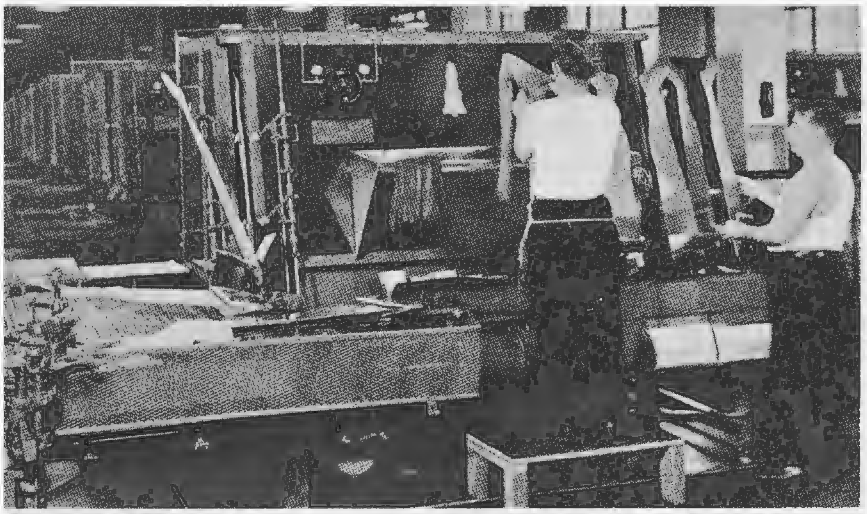
Looping

Seaming

Examining

Dye House

Good light and modern equipment afford excellent working conditions



Boarding

Packing

Color matching

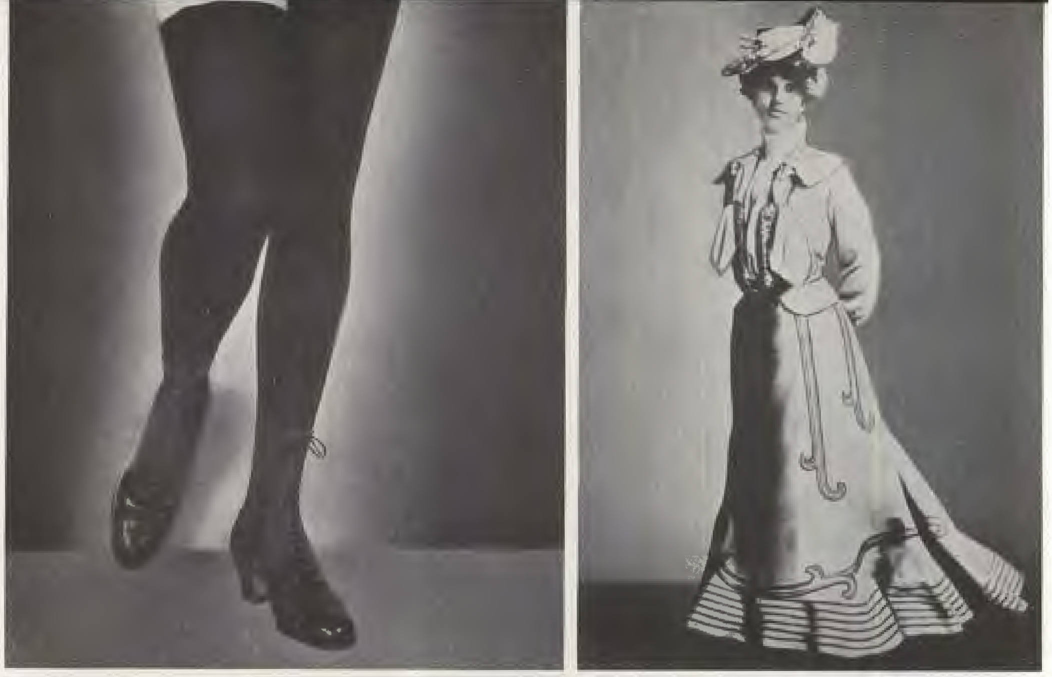
The dye house, between the two finishing buildings, erected 1929

## CHAPTER 8

## BERKSHIRE KNITTING MILLS PRODUCTS

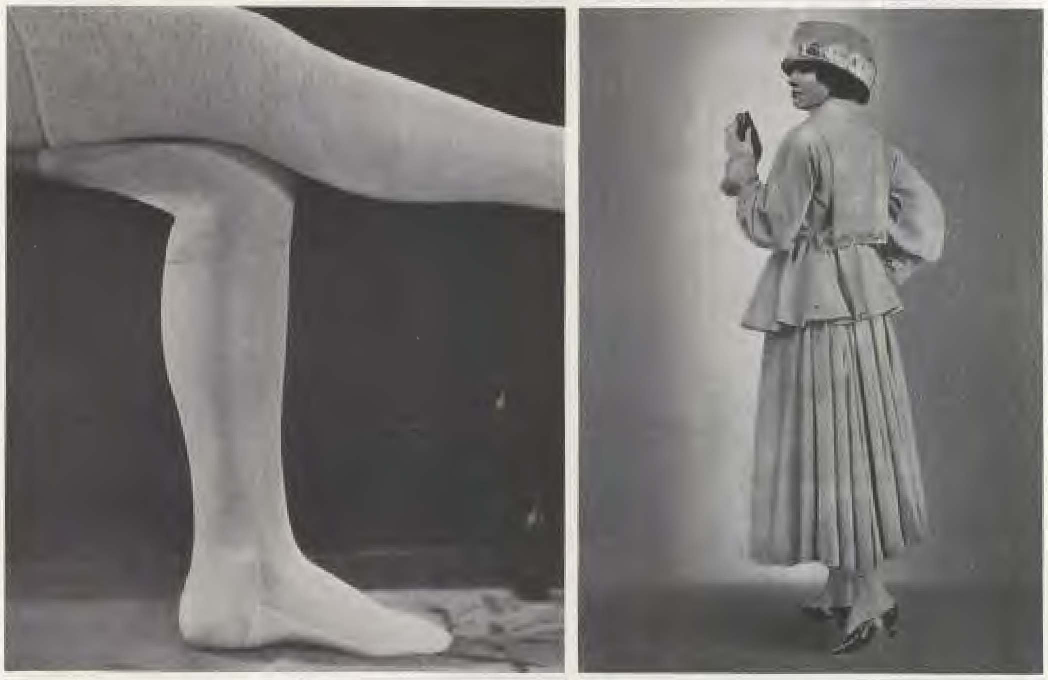
Perhaps if young women had never gone in for bicycles and the two-step and other frivolities, there would be little to tell about their hosiery. To look at the other side of the question, if full-fashioned knitting and silk had never been made available, woman's status today might be quite different. For while it is true that the way people live has much to do with what they need, it is equally true that what they have strongly influences what they do.

The workings of this curious cycle, as it relates to hosiery, may be traced from the middle of the sixteenth century, when knitted hosiery began to replace sewed stockings, down through relatively unimportant changes until 1864, when a machine was invented that accomplished the extraordinary feat of shaping the stocking in the knitting. The improvements that followed



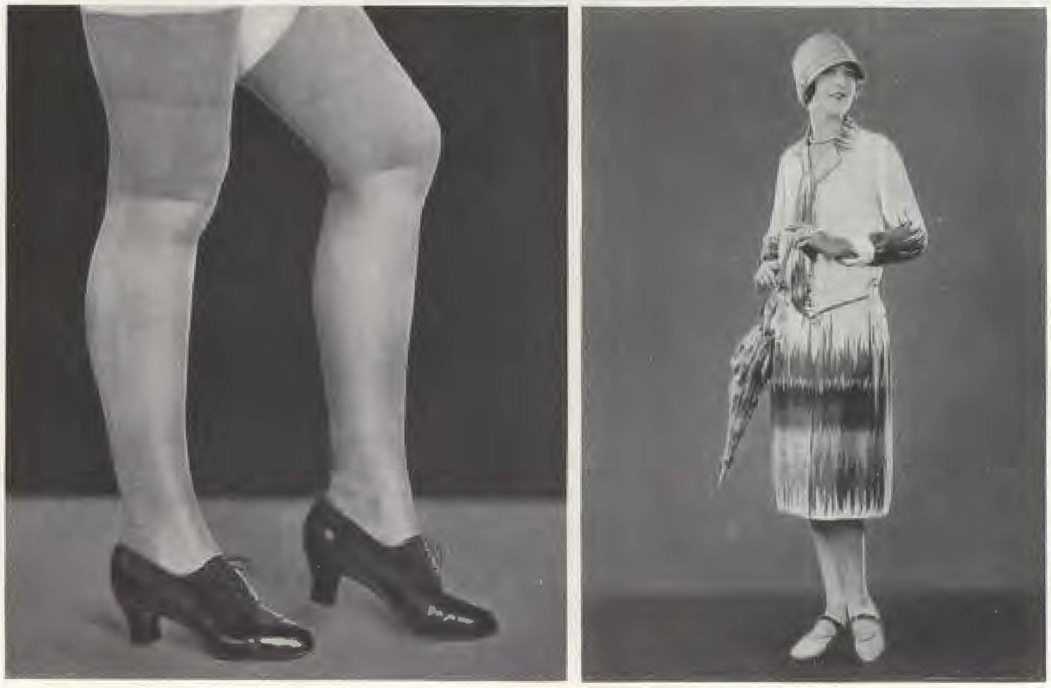
**1900**

Black cotton



**1915**

Half silk boot



**1918**

Three-quarter silk boot

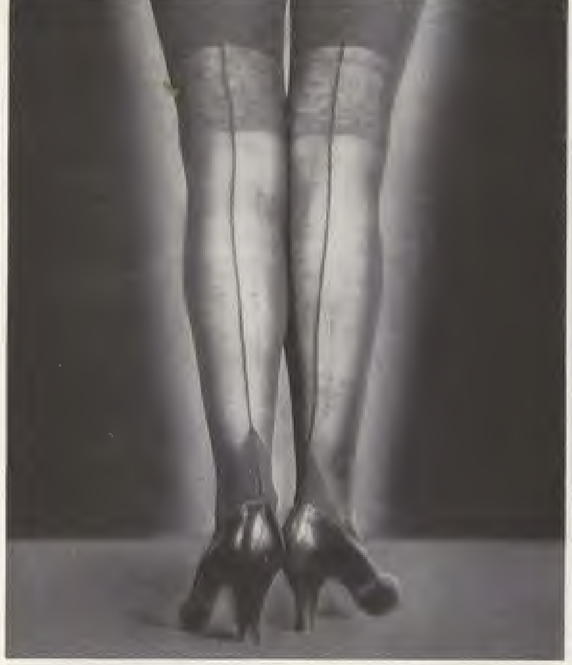
were not startling until the first practical American full-fashioned machines came into use. Since then, woman's hosiery and her place in American life have changed amazingly, and the improvement of each has helped to bring about a corresponding improvement in the other.

It was in 1906 that the Berkshire Knitting Mills produced its first stockings, which were 33 gauge and of cotton. As the gauge indicates the number of knitted loops in an inch and a half of width, those were reasonably fine cotton stockings. Even then the lure of silk was such that many a woman held in reserve a pair of silk stockings for state occasions, though only the rich could wear them regularly. Others found a measure of satisfaction in cotton that was mercerized or otherwise treated to produce a shiny effect, for the luster of silk was an obvious standard of quality. Hosiery of this material and of chiffon was given impetus by the sensational hobble skirt and slit skirt of 1910.

There was much talk of "equality" in the next ten years, and not all of the talk was from suffragettes. There were those who took tennis and golf and horseback riding seriously. Some thought of business and politics, others of driving cars and making careers. There was a little bravado with it—a natural reaction from long repression. These evidences of woman's determination to live a more active life foretold the end of cotton hosiery; silk and full-fashioning were about to come into their own. Mercerized chiffon was the earliest attempt at sheerness, but it was not enough; the half silk boot, 36 gauge,

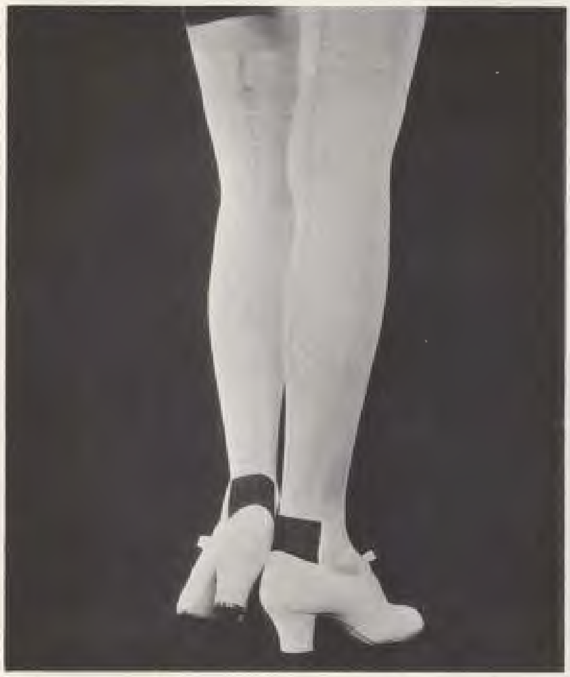
## 1922

Pointex heels, three-quarter silk boot



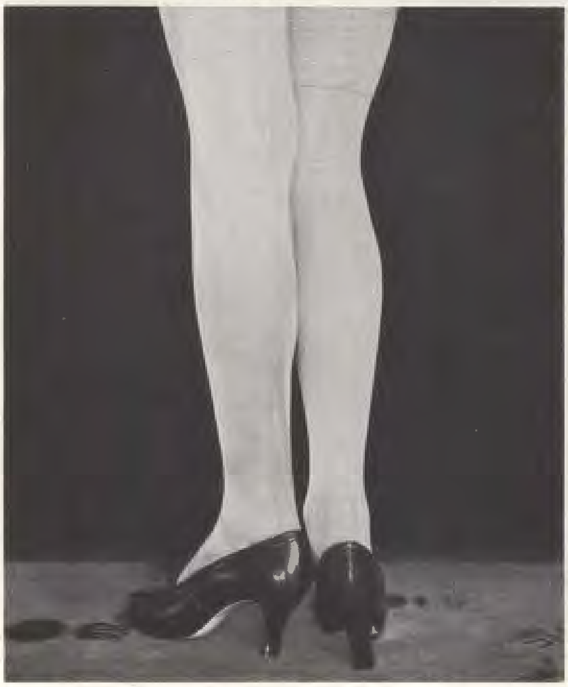
## 1927

Silk leg and welt, the "Black Bottom" novelty



## 1928

The narrow French heel



was in vogue by 1915, with mercerized toe, sole and square pocket heel. Weighted silk had proved unsatisfactory, and the Berkshire Knitting Mills was using natural silk.

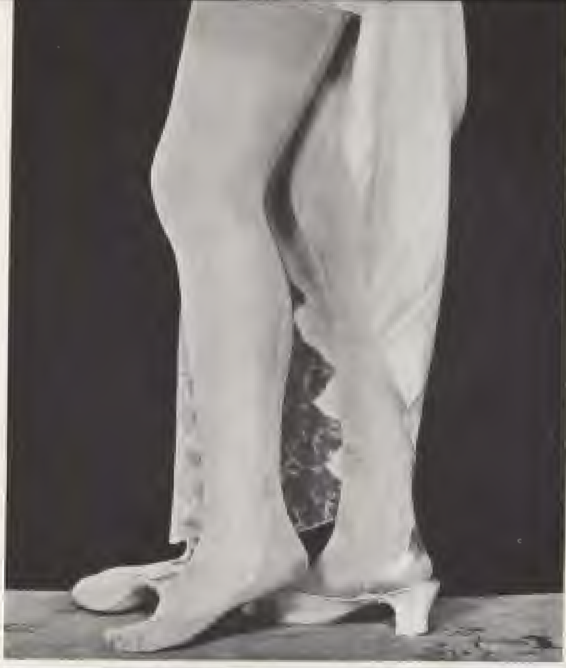
It can hardly be doubted that the silk encouraged the style of higher skirts, and that they in turn necessitated the 39-gauge, three-quarter length silk boot of 1918. In 1922, though the three-quarter length boot was still popular, the Pointex heel had appeared to give an illusion of slimness, and the gauge had jumped to 42. Two years later the Berkshire Knitting Mills pioneered in the introduction of rayon hosiery, which brought attractive stockings of "silky" appearance within reach of millions of women who could not yet afford silk.

The "Black Bottom" of 1927, although chiefly a novelty, introduced silk throughout the length of the stocking. The square heel and the seam were black ingrain. A year later the gauge had increased to 45 and the narrow French heel appeared, with block-in-toe construction. The extremely low shoes of 1931 required a complete change in the foot; the answer was found in the full cradle foot, with gauge as high as 48.

Mesh and net lace swept the country in 1932 as a really sensational development. "Kantrun" hosiery also appeared. As the ever-insistent demand for more sheerness required finer yarn, higher gauge was again attempted and some three-thread hosiery of 51 gauge appeared. The thread had a crêpe twist; the glossy sheen of silk was losing its popularity. The chief development,

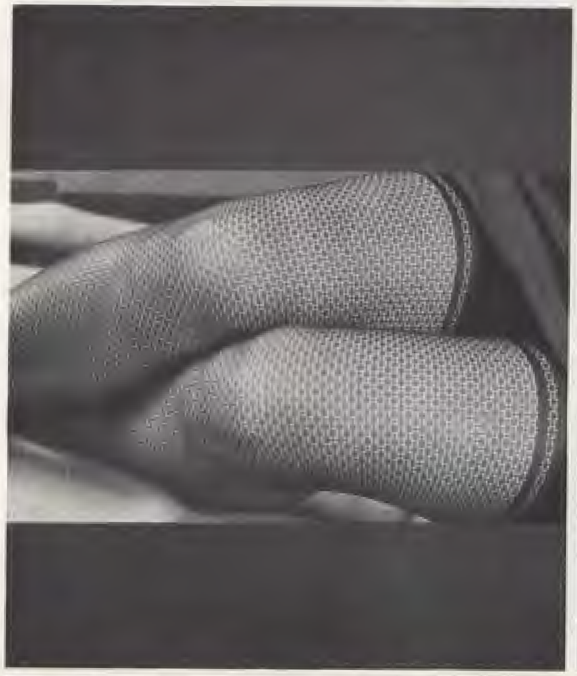
## 1931

Full-cradled foot



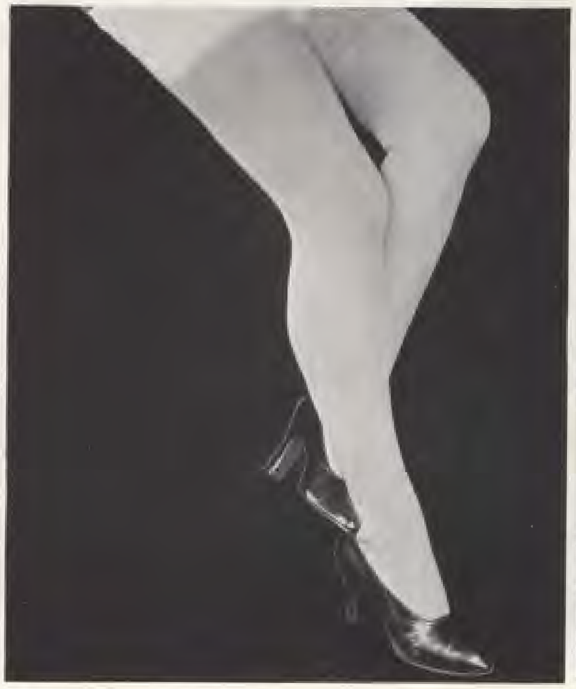
## 1932

Mesh and net lace



## 1933

Greater sheerness, extra
foot reinforcements



however, was a stocking with "Dureel" (triple heel) and "Duroto" (extra strong foot construction) reinforcements, made necessary by chiffon hosiery. Durability was no less necessary than beauty.

The "Seriphane" of 1934, offering two-thread and three-thread 51 gauge sheerness, introduced the new three-carrier process to achieve clearness, evenness, and perfect tone hitherto unattainable. 1935 ushered in knee-length hosiery, which achieved immediate popularity. The new "Berkshire foot," introduced in the same year, provided additional reinforcing, a new heel shape, and narrowing stitches that begin a full inch in front of the heel.

With these visible improvements there have been others that only the microscope reveals. Berkshire standards begin with the selection of the raw silk in Japan; accepting only a small percentage of the silk offered, the Company gets an important advantage at the start. Another selection, after the spinning process, then the silk is "twisted" in various ways, the threads being entwined by groups before they are united into a single strand. This twisting is part of Berkshire Knitting Mills' success in producing dull finish, crêpe effects, and other features that are much in demand, without sacrifice of the all-important quality of durability.

In the knitting, the utmost care is taken to guard against the dangers to which fine silk is exposed. Each machine carries its own humidifying cases of glass in which the silk cones are placed and from which the silk is drawn. A

### 1934

Uniformity of tone achieved by the three-carrier process

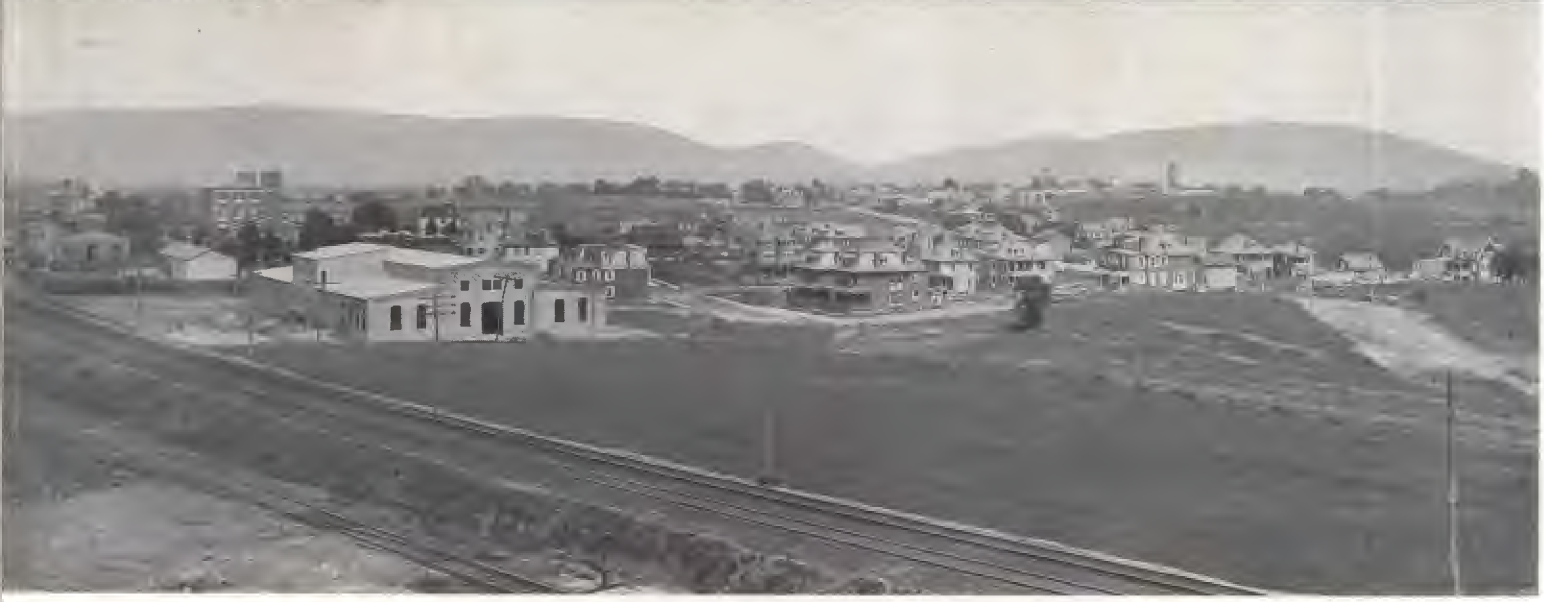
### 1935

Knee-length with elastic tops, "Snugettes"

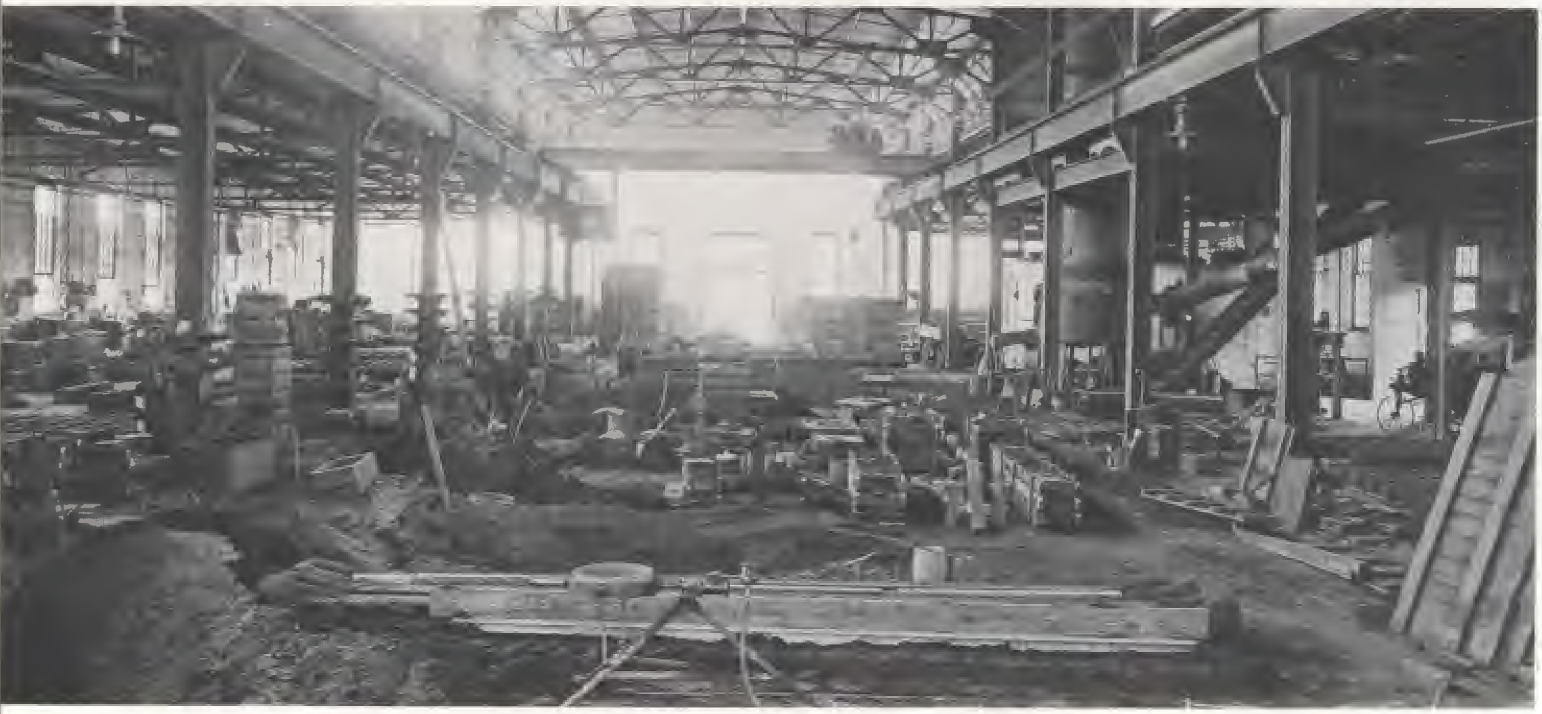
### 1936

The Berkshire foot; new toe, heel, and arch

special expanding form is used to show up literally every loop in the stocking, and expert examiners detect the slightest flaws. After the dyeing, a boarding process dries the stockings on individual forms without stretching or excessive warmth, thus conserving strength and a desirable finish. If any faults develop they are found in the many inspections that assure Berkshire perfection.



Old foundry building, 1906



Interior, old foundry

Looking toward the bend

Molding department, old foundry

# CHAPTER 9

## FOUNDRY

In the whole long story of the Wyomissing Industries, there is probably no time that witnessed more far-reaching decisions than the turn of the century. The work on the new full-fashioned machine, the launching of the Narrow Fabric Company, and the incorporation of the Textile Machine Works did not prevent due attention to a need that was becoming something of a problem. The increased complexity of the full-fashioned machine imposed unusual requirements on the grey iron castings from which so many of its parts were made. It appeared probable that a foundry department within the plant might provide more accurately made metal parts with some economy of operation and with more control of service.

The establishment of a foundry meant a considerable departure from the familiar machine shop practice, but it was undertaken wholeheartedly. In

Foundry, built in 1928

Cleanliness and order apparent everywhere the rear of the recently enlarged shop an annex was built in 1900, and there the necessary equipment was installed for producing castings for gears, frames and other parts. By 1903 there were facilities for an output of four to five tons of castings per day, and a catalog of that year solicited business for both patterns and castings.

So rapidly did the demand increase that in 1904 two separate buildings were erected for the new branch of the business, and only two years passed before they, too, were outgrown. They were, therefore, turned over to the machine shop, which had equally pressing needs. A larger building was erected further to the west; even this was soon crowded and a smaller building parallel to it was erected in 1913, with a railroad siding. This served to house the core room and storage for sand, pig-iron, and other materials. Both of these buildings were enlarged several times in the next few years.

In 1910 George Moyer was brought into the Foundry as Superintendent. He brought to the business a fine combination of technical knowledge and sales ability and remained in the service almost 22 years, until his death in 1931.

The space problem arose again in 1916 and further extensions were made, even though that necessitated a bend in the structures to follow a curve in the railroad. The additions of 1916 provided greatly increased space for all foundry operations, but better facilities were also needed for the rapidly in-

Sand slinging machine

Molding Machine

Electric furnaces for aluminum and bronze

Rotary sand blast

Wood Pattern Shop

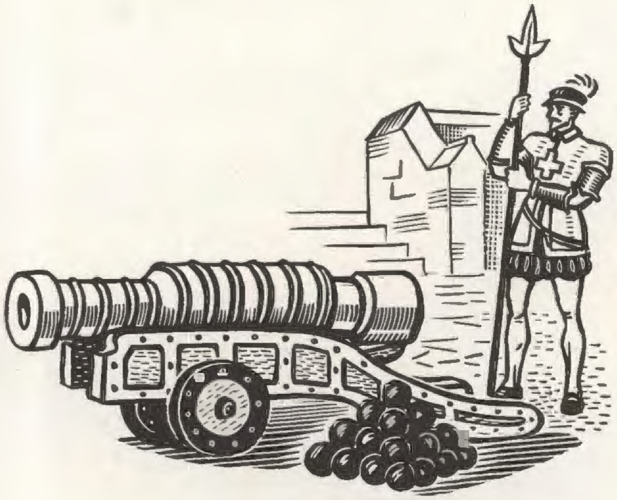
Electric trucks—cast iron floor

creasing personnel, so another extension was added at the southeastern corner of the main foundry building to provide a locker room and shower baths.

Large orders from outside concerns helped to swell a volume of business that was already steadily increasing, and in the late twenties it was again decided that the space occupied by the Foundry should be turned over in its entirety to the other departments of the business. This time, as further expansion westward was no longer possible, the Wyomissing Industries made their first invasion of the spacious fields to the north beyond the railroad tracks. There was erected in 1928 such a plant as foundry workers have dreamed of. One vast building provides all the space and facilities for the main foundry operations, while adjoining buildings afford space for equipment and storage.

Through 42,500 window panes, light streams in on a floor 820 feet long and 245 feet wide, where the Woolworth Building could be laid on its side with room to spare. Power-operated machinery takes care of practically all heavy work. Over cast iron runways that provide smooth travel, electric trucks carry molten metal and finished castings with equal ease. Electrically operated skylights open or close at the touch of a button on a central switchboard. The air passes through a dust-arresting system that removes dust and grit.

This entire plant, with all of its equipment and its well-planned operations, is calculated to bring out the best there is in men, as well as in metal. It embodies the spirit of the Wyomissing Industries.



# CHAPTER 10

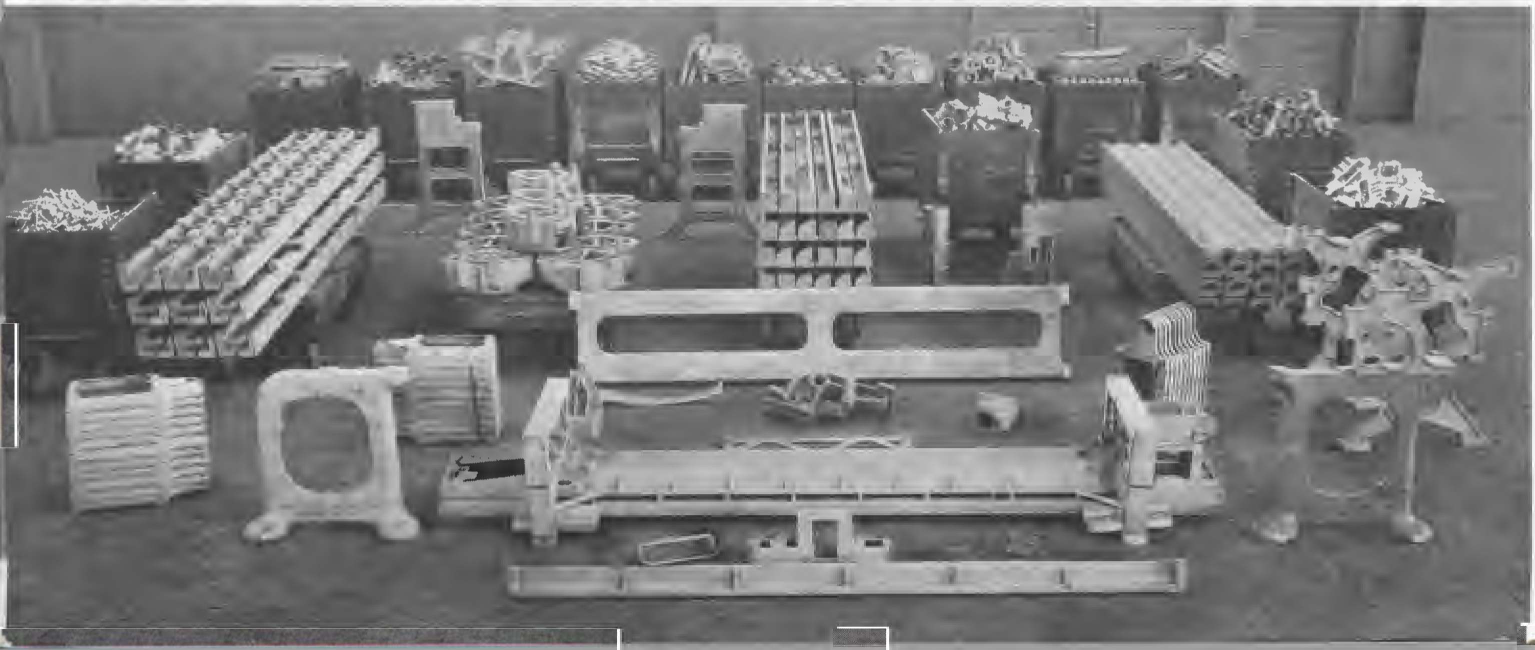
## FOUNDRY PRODUCTS

It was the need for better castings, more dependable and less expensive, that brought about the undertaking of foundry work.

As the new department went into operation, it supplied gears, framework and other parts for braiding machines and the new full-fashioned machines that were just becoming a promising product of the Company. About five braiding machines per day was the capacity of the machine shop by 1903, and the foundry facilities were also offered to outside industries. A steadily growing business resulted. The castings made at that time were chiefly of grey iron, but as time went on, brass and aluminum were added and all three classes of castings were purchased in increasing quantities by other firms.

A variety of industries is represented among the users, notably ice cream, typesetting, automotive, hair dressing, power plant machinery, tractors,

Foundry products are sent far and wide

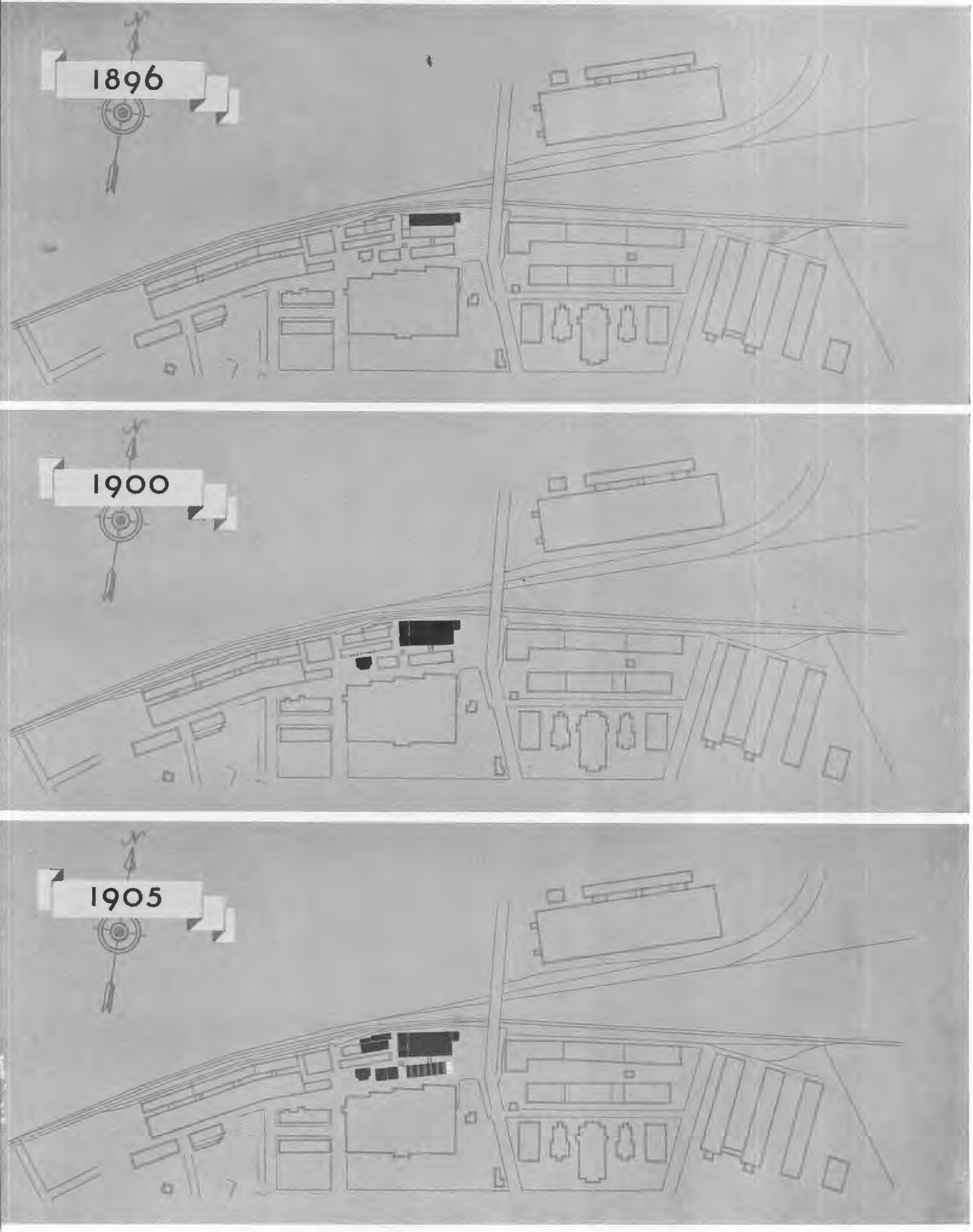


hardware, oil burners, tools, phonographs, radio parts, household appliances, turbines, Diesel engines, water meters and instruments. During the War, machine parts were supplied to the United States Government for the making of munitions.

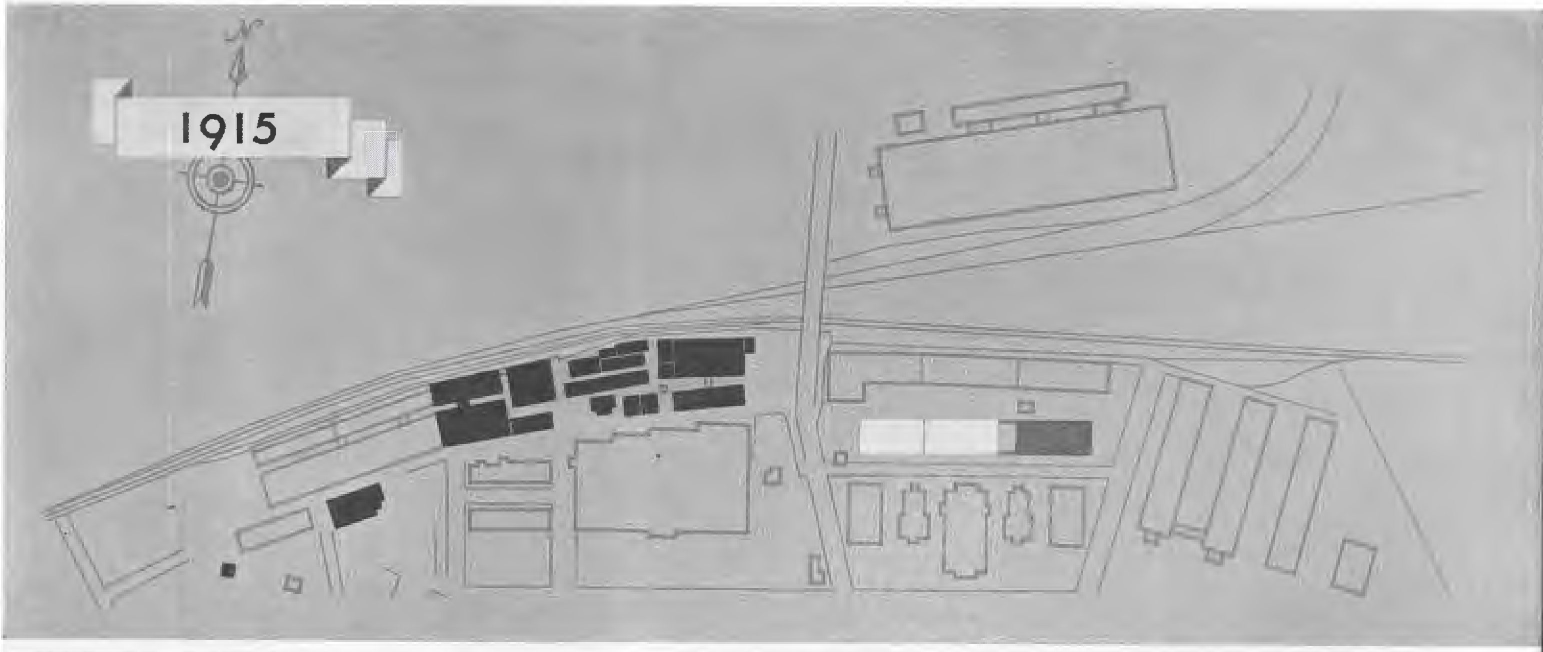
The emphasis in the Foundry has been on the production of parts that reduce to a minimum the later operations of boring, turning, milling and grinding. Castings are kept close to pattern and patterns are kept close to tolerances.

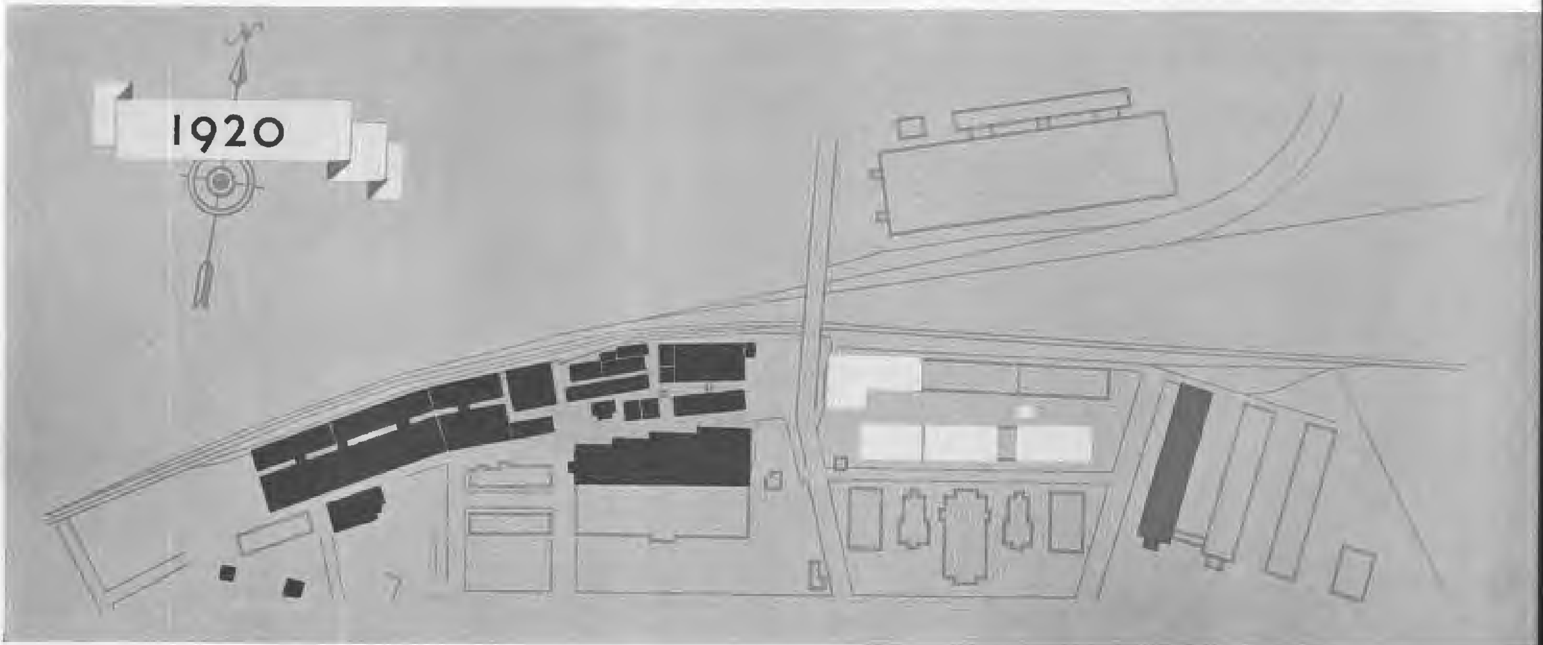
No outsider would be able to see the slightest similarity between the original foundry and this mammoth plant. The cramped quarters are but a memory. Equipment that could scarcely have been imagined in 1901 has replaced heavy labor and accelerated operations. Leo, the mastiff, blissfully unconscious of the damage his heavy paws wrought among carefully prepared molds, is all but forgotten. Old familiar faces are missing.

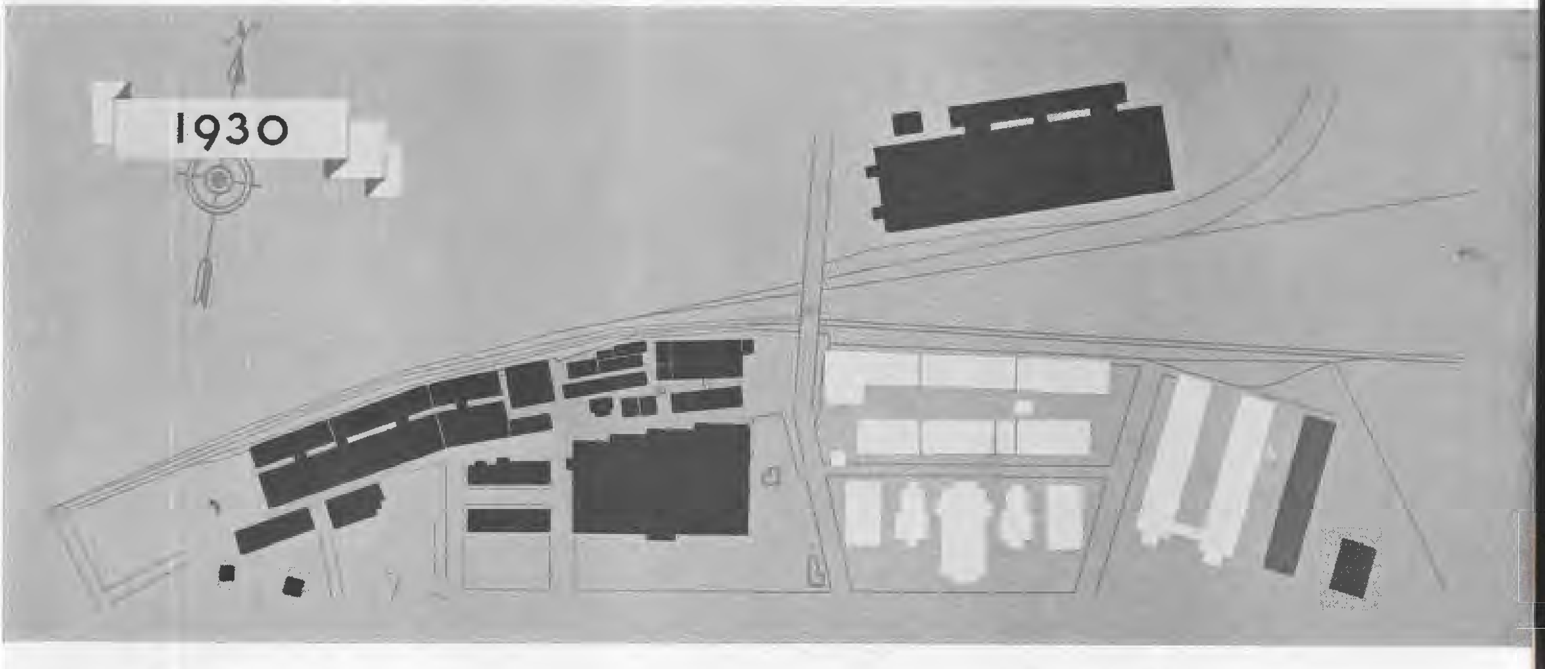
To those who know, however, this is the same Foundry. It is simply the modern chapter of a continuous story—good equipment, painstaking methods and inflexible standards. It is the place where the foundations of good "Reading" machines are laid. It is the group of strong men who turn out smooth, dependable castings—on schedule. It does not change.



A diagram of the development of the Wyomissing Industries

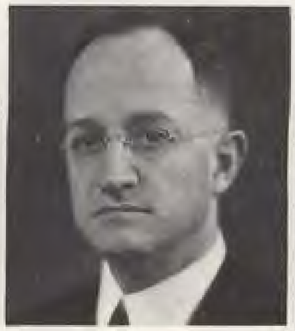


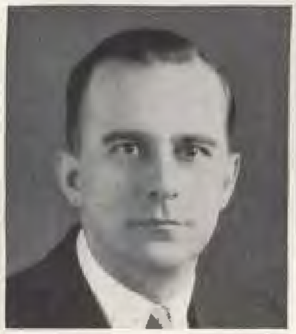


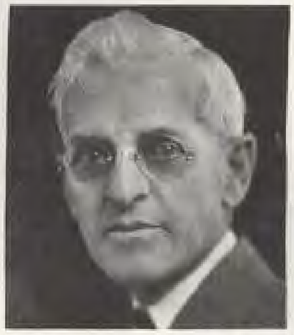


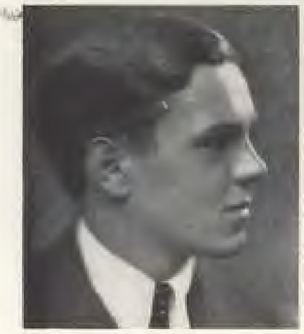
⬛ Textile Machine Works ⬜ Berkshire Knitting Mills ▨ Narrow Fabric Company

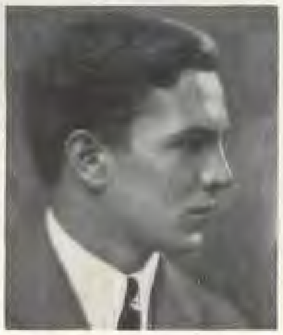
# OFFICERS AND SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE WYOMISSING INDUSTRIES

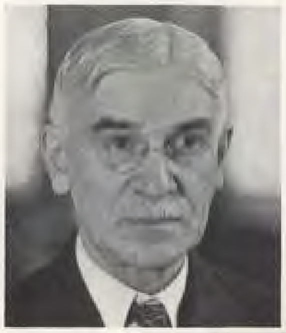

Dr. J. E. Livingood

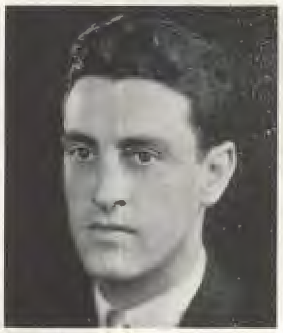

Alfred Hemmerich

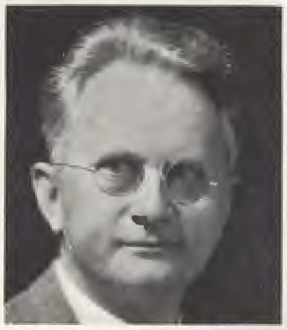

Howard M. Fry

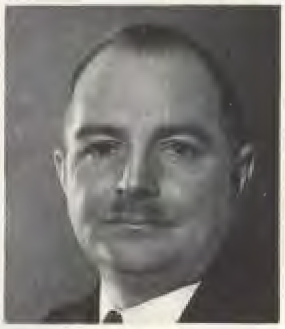

Ferdinand K. Thun

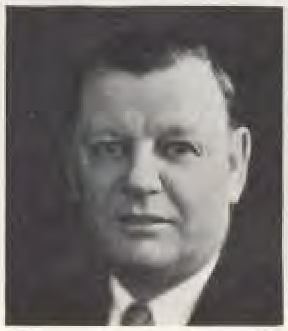

Louis R. Thun

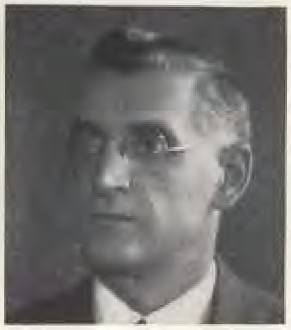

Wm. T. Arnold

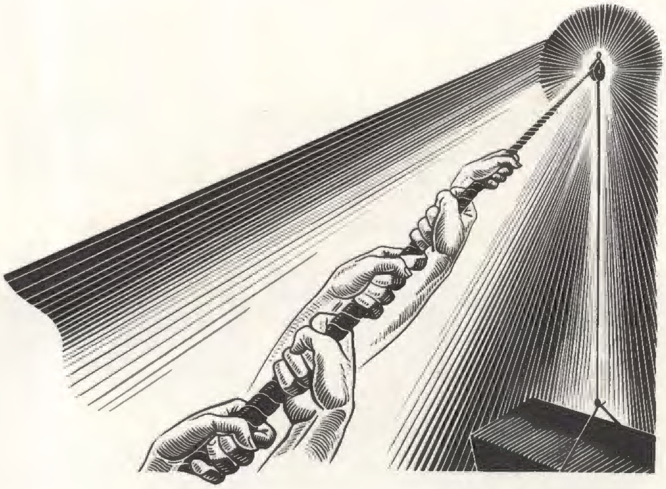

Sam. R. Fry


Hugo Hemmerich


Gustav Gastrich


J. B. Greenstreet


Conrad J. Busch



# CHAPTER II

## THOSE WHO HELPED

In this book is inscribed the story of two leaders who have capably guided the Wyomissing Industries from an humble beginning to their present great estate. The record would be incomplete without specific recognition of that great army of men and women who have served these Industries—those who have helped.

They are predominantly of German descent. The majority of them are Pennsylvania Germans and the wholesome character of that sturdy race shows itself unmistakably in the matter-of-fact practicality, the good-humored philosophy and the unusually high standards of artisanship encountered so frequently among the personnel of the Wyomissing Industries.

There are still several of the stalwarts who made up that little group of machine-builders at 222 Cedar Street. They can tell many a yarn of that period

Peter J. Moos

William Moyer

Alvin L. Brumbach

Geo. Renninger

Louis C. Hartman

A. S. Ibach

Jos. P. Ohlinger

A. R. Behney

Andrew M. Grebe

H. Irvin Nizart

Wm. Stadelmeyer

George Vogel

Robert Kintzer

William Grohs

John B. Heinz

Geo. W. Miller

Irvin N. Smith

Stephen Walkowiak

Stephen Kerber

Howard Keener

G. Rufus Lutz

Chas. E. Kocher

Daniel N. Brown

Geo. W. Hecker

W. L. Brumbach

N. E. Richards

Melchior Zwicky

Anton Dolwig

Felix Degener

Edward Hart

L. R. Heffelfinger

Harry A. Seidel

W. B. Kelchner

Edward D. Beam

J. F. Ruth

E. K. Eyrich

C. L. Keppley

Edward J. Moser

Adam N. Moyer

W. E. Dierolf

Charles G. Becker

John H. Schmidt

J. P. Grammaticas

A. M. Gaul

H. S. Edris

G. W. Miller

H. G. Willman

F. R. Noll

J. F. Gross

C. F. Hinnershitz

C. F. Meyer

Chas. B. Richard

George W. Mullin

Robt. Dunkelberger

Harry E. Bickle

Robert R. Boone

Employees of Textile Machine Works who have served the Company continuously for twenty-five years or more. Beginning with Peter J. Moos on the opposite page they appear in the chronological order of length of service

Mabel Balmer

Carl F. Meyer

Mary Trace

Helen Endy

Francis J. Taubitz

Howard W. Klein

Rose M. Nunemacher

Andrew G. Reed

Emma Thiele

Emily Esterly

George Zerr

Employees of Narrow Fabric Company who have served continuously for twenty-five years or longer

H. M. Fry

Below, and on the second page following, are employees of Berkshire Knitting Mills who have served continuously for a quarter century or more

Herbert P. Potteiger

Wm. Hinnershitz

Eva Wenrich

I. B. Whitman

Frieda Lotz

Clayton E. Trenkle

Claude Hoffman

John Heck

Robert Armitage

Minnie Hafer

of early beginnings, of their efforts to cope with the lack of production facilities by bringing into play their native resourcefulness and by plenty of hard work. They made the most of what there was and gave the best that was in them.

They were not blind, either, to the trials and tribulations of the young firm. These common experiences in the uncertain days of 1892 bound all of them together with a fine spirit. A tradition was created by that initial group of "old faithfuls" to be handed down the line as the force gradually grew in numbers. Its soundness and worthiness are best indicated by the unusually large group of employees with long employment records. 108 men and women of the present force have served the Wyomissing Industries continuously for more than 25 years.

Among the foremen, superintendents, and executives there have been forceful men who carried groups and departments along with them through sheer strength of character; there have been others whose leadership has been manifested rather in their restraint—quiet-mannered men whose reassuring confidence has won the support of a thousand men and women in the shops. With all their diverse personalities and methods, however, these leaders have had certain things in common: all of them have transmitted to their groups an iron-clad insistence on high standards. All of them have guarded jealously the welfare of their fellow workers, requiring in return an attitude of loyalty and fidelity to ideals.

Wm. H. Angstadt

Emil Richter

Clarence Trump

William Weber

Laura Glase

Ernest Bick

Wm. T. Arnold

Webster Schnabel

Edward Schrack

John Zervanos

Hugo Hemmerich

Paul Dunkelberger

Jacob Bennethum

Edwin Sando

Martin Kurtz

Irvin Noll

Edgar Reidel

Carl Finger

William Brenner

Charles I. Noecker

Claude Hilbert

William Leiby

Wm. Seaman

Christian Ortmiller

Lester Kissinger

Wm. Kroenig

Daniel Weidner

Robert Mohn

Earl F. Dohner

Maude Ruth

These lieutenants have received from the two partners, and have passed on to their men, an idealism that encourages freedom in the exercise of craftsmanship. Men and women alike have responded with a keen interest in the betterment of products and in the advancement of Company standards. They have shown, similarly, a clear understanding of the mutual benefit that results from real teamwork among an entire personnel.

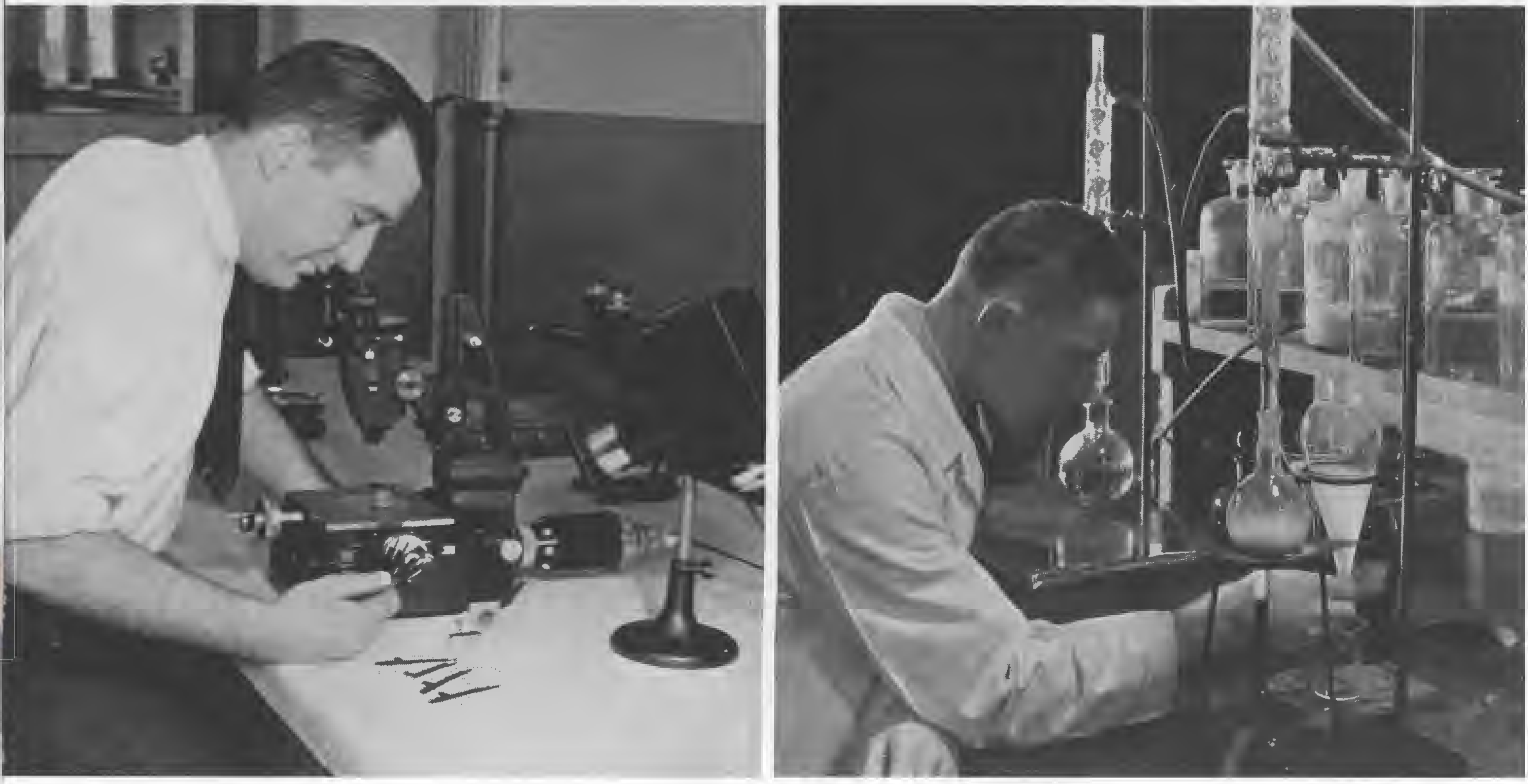
Among the many whose efforts have been merged in the building of the Industries were some who have gone from this world. Theirs was no small part, and the frequency with which their names are mentioned bears witness to their lasting influence.

The thousands of men and women who stream through the doorways and gates on their way to their tasks are an inspiring sight. They are active, alert, and good-humored. From their animated faces and from snatches of their conversation, it is apparent that they have caught the spirit; they have a real part in the development of the Wyomissing Industries.

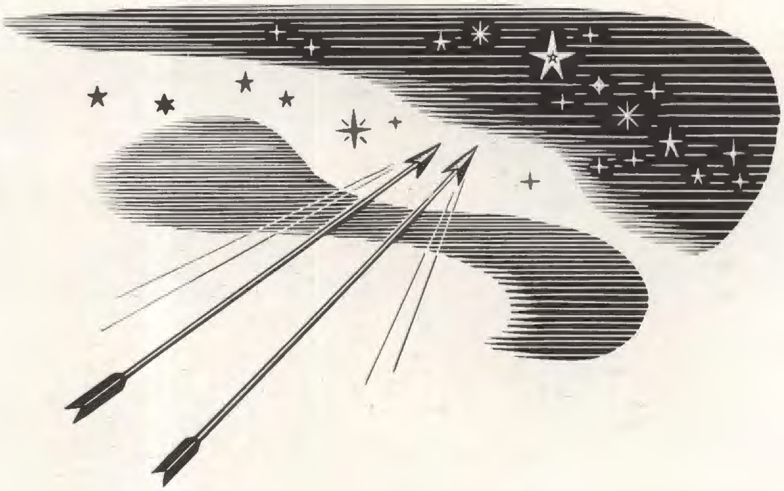
The tunnel; there are no unsightly wires and poles on the grounds, no trenches to dig

One of the first ideals of the Industries was environment. Ivy, cherry blossoms, and shrubbery are found in profusion

Improvements arise out of employees' suggestions



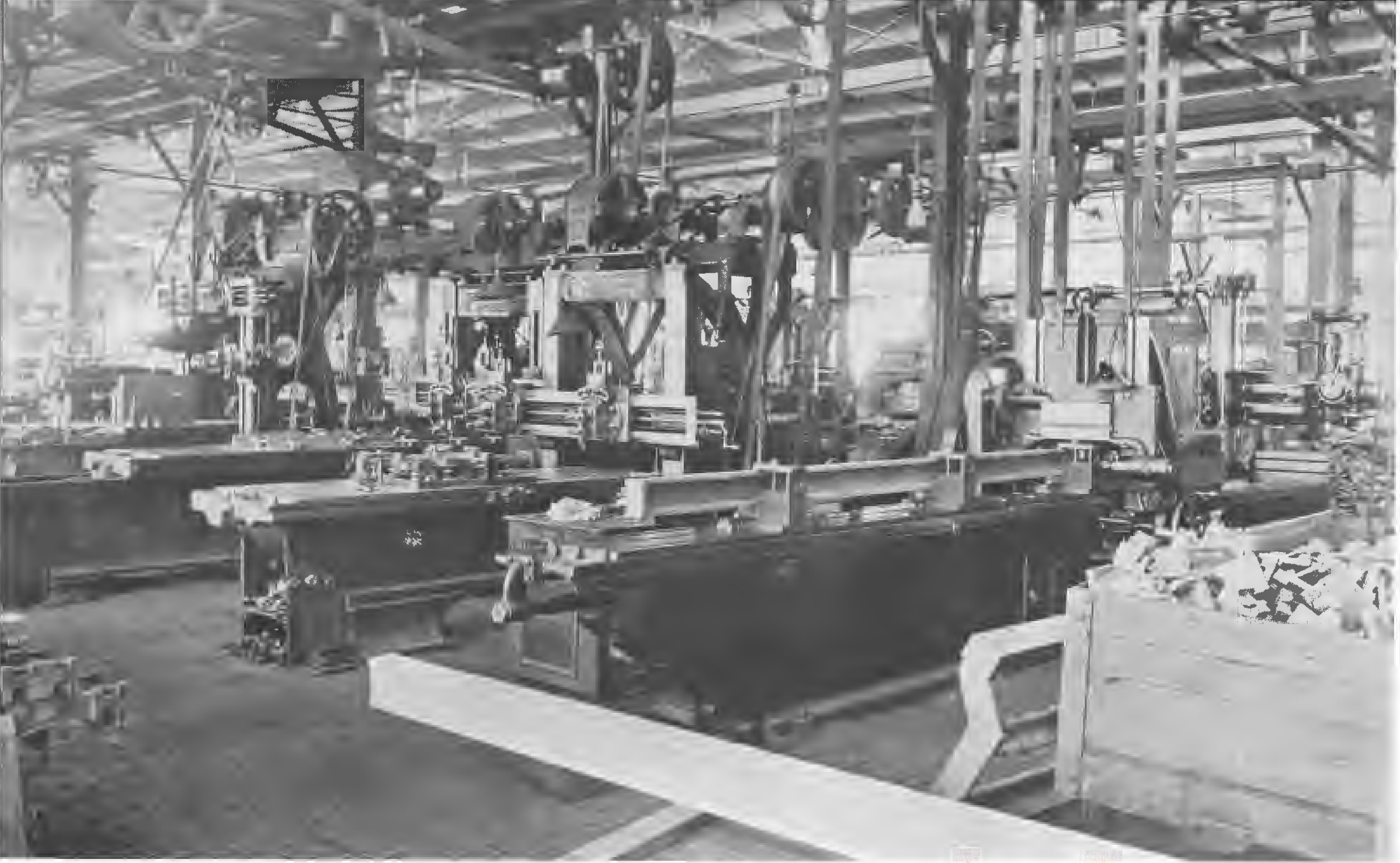
Constant research insures progress



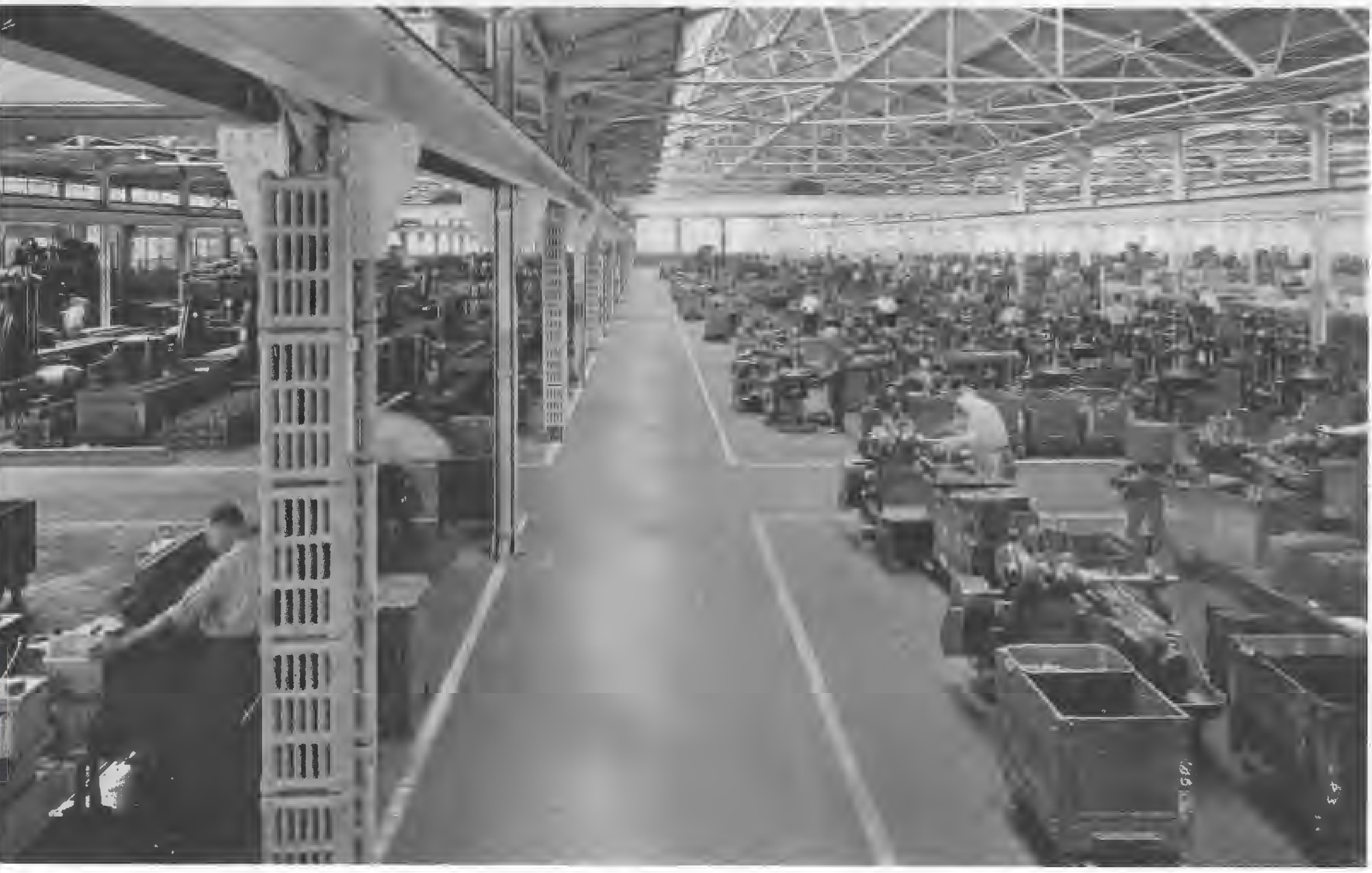
# CHAPTER 12

## IDEALS

The passage of more than two score years has not dimmed the memories of the few who knew the Cedar Street plant of Thun & Janssen. They well remember their first impressions, and they unite in saying that good workmanship was the paramount virtue. Very soon they came to realize that skill in the use of tools was praised not so much for its own sake but as a means of attaining an all-important end—a fine product. This high standard showed immediately in the quality of the product, and time demonstrated what is equally important—long life. The Company was only seven years old when it received an award from the National Export Exhibition in Philadelphia, an honor that must have brought considerable satisfaction to the partners and their men. Nine pages out of an early fifty-six-page catalog were devoted to such fundamental principles as plant, standards, and methods.

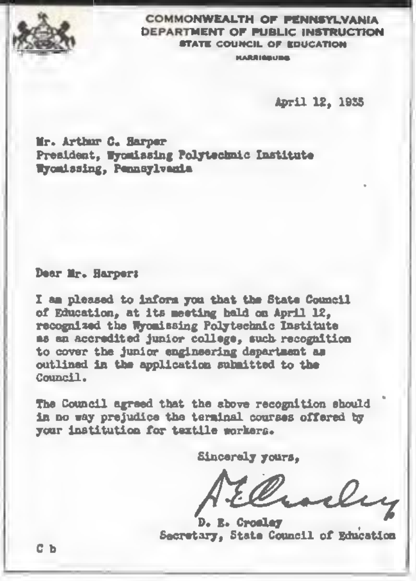


The removal of belting and shafting transformed the machine shop



These standards were naturally adopted by the later units of the Industries as they came into being. Experimental work developed into separate departments. All of the Industries have efficient systems of inspection; one boasts twenty-seven different examinations in the course of production; another applies a rigid system of tolerances. The installation of chemical and physical laboratories for test purposes in the selection of raw materials, which were always subject to careful testing, was a typical step toward standardization.

In order that employees might develop the necessary technical skill and acquire the specialized knowledge needed in many departments, apprenticeships were offered shortly after Textile Machine Works was established, with three years to be served. In 1900 the system was improved, requiring four years. The Berkshire Knitting Mills also provided an apprentice course. These preliminary steps led to the establishment of an Educational Department in 1927, which arranged for four weeks of schooling to alternate with four of shop work, at that time a pioneer step in the training of mechanics. The name "Wyomissing Trade School" was first used, but as the school widened its scope it adopted the more suitable name, "Wyomissing Polytechnic Institute." It was incorporated in March, 1933, and has since been accredited as a Junior Engineering College, serving Reading as a technical school. In order to establish a definite link between the Institute and the foremen of the various industries, to whom the practical training of apprentices and workmen is entrusted, a



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION
HARRISBURG

April 12, 1935

Mr. Arthur C. Harper
President, Wyomissing Polytechnic Institute
Wyomissing, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Harper:

I am pleased to inform you that the State Council of Education, at its meeting held on April 12, recognized the Wyomissing Polytechnic Institute as an accredited junior college, such recognition to cover the junior engineering department as outlined in the application submitted to the Council.

The Council agreed that the above recognition should in no way prejudice the terminal courses offered by your institution for textile workers.

Sincerely yours,

D. E. Crosley
Secretary, State Council of Education

C b

The Wyomissing Polytechnic Institute merits, in every respect, its standing as an accredited junior college

monthly foremen's conference has been established. It furnishes a forum for the discussion of the various problems involved in foremanship.

In each of the Industries, a Suggestion System is in operation. The sponsors of ideas remain strictly anonymous during the process of investigation. It is only when rewards are announced that the identity of the originator of a suggestion becomes known. The fairness of this plan is obvious, and the personnel take frequent advantage of this opportunity to share in the responsibilities and rewards. The majority of the suggestions relate to the improvement of products.

The plant and the working conditions are no less the object of attention. The care of tools and buildings was emphasized from the very beginning, and eventually standardized. Efforts to improve working conditions, as well as to secure the best possible lighting, eliminated all overhead power transmission which gave way to individual motor drives; this was one of the earliest instances of progress in this direction. Partly for good light conditions and partly for cleanliness, a standard color plan was adopted for plant interiors and machinery, preceding by many years the adoption of similar official colors by the National Machine Tool Association.

In the Wyomissing plants appeared the first built-in lathe motor, shop trucks of their own design, tool closets with good looks, and steel racks for larger objects. Good wide "streets" were provided in the shops and well

The Wyomissing Industries participate in celebrations of big events. Patriotic Day, 1917

Reading's 175th Anniversary

The N.R.A.

Employees' Band, 1920

marked with white lines, so that there might be no excuse for accidents, as well as to facilitate traffic. Materials and tools are kept strictly in place.

About a dozen acres of window glass are kept clean by a crew of window washers whose work is never done, and the same may be said of paint crews and the cleaners who go over floors, walls, and machinery. Cleaning is made a science. Sweeping and scrubbing operations, practically all mechanical, are adapted to the various floors according to their composition and the nature of the work.

One of the striking features of the Wyomissing Industries is the attractiveness of the surroundings. Almost before the path to the new plant was well broken, there was a small expenditure for trees. As time went on there was more and more attention to landscaping, good paving, and good building. The adoption of a tunnel system for all wires and pipes eliminated unsightly poles and made repair work possible without the destruction of lawns.

This unusual attention to environment has an undoubted effect on visitors, on the residents of the borough, and on the employees; what started from a natural sense of orderliness has developed into a real asset and a tradition. The pride of the personnel in their plant and work is always noticeable, but particularly on the occasions when the Textile Machine Works holds its annual "Open House" for the general public. For three evenings, thousands of people come into the great main machine shop. They wander up and down the

Health Benefit Associations are encouraged and aided

Foremen's Banquet

Open House, visited by 25,000 guests

wide aisles of the plant watching mechanical processes in full swing. They study display boards and see the processes of braiding and knitting as they were years ago and as they are now.

They show intelligent interest and keen enjoyment, employees and families and friends and strangers, all mingling in one great throng. Twenty-five thousand of them enter into the spirit of the exhibition and share the pride of the workmen and attendants in the orderliness as well as the magnitude of the Wyomissing Industries.

Of all the ideals that prevail in the Industries none is more characteristic than the attention paid to the welfare of employees. Evidences of this interest were noticeable in the early Cedar Street days, although that was not a time of advanced thought as to the worker and his welfare. Measures taken by the Company to provide good working conditions, and instances of concern for personal welfare, were far ahead of the attitude of the day. Labor Day, honoring the working man and his rights, only in 1894 was first recognized as a legal holiday; just a few years earlier, governmental workers had received the first protection of Civil Service laws.

Efforts to advance employees' interests increased in number and scope as time went on. During the War, when provisions were scarce and high priced, arrangements were made for the purchase of carload lots of groceries and coal for distribution at cost, and this led eventually to the beginning of a

War Gardens

The Delta Store, established 1920

Interior of the modern Delta Store

coöperative store for employees' families. This, in turn, was replaced by the modern Delta Store, a fine centrally located retail establishment which operates several branches in the shops as "canteens."

The purchasing and distribution of commodities that were the beginning of the store were supplemented by the allotment of ground for war gardens. These two services were the beginning of what has been called "Coöperative Service," a grouping of the welfare activities of all units of the Industries. One of the earliest of these was the establishment of a Dispensary including medical, dental and ocular service. These were housed in a remodeled dwelling until the Dispensary Building was provided in 1925. An Insurance Division covers compensation risks, in addition to which group life insurance is provided for all employees through a regular life insurance company. An informal pension plan provides a number of retired employees with regular compensation.

Coöperative Service provides also for the daily needs of employees, as well as emergencies. Health benefit associations are operated by the employees with the assistance of the firm. Two cafeterias that began to serve the Narrow Fabric Company and the Berkshire Knitting Mills separately were merged in 1925, when a fine new building was provided for employees of all the Industries. This Cafeteria is large enough to accommodate 1200 people and is equipped with excellent facilities. Recreation rooms and smoking rooms

The first dispensary and the present building.
Medical, dental, and ocular service is available

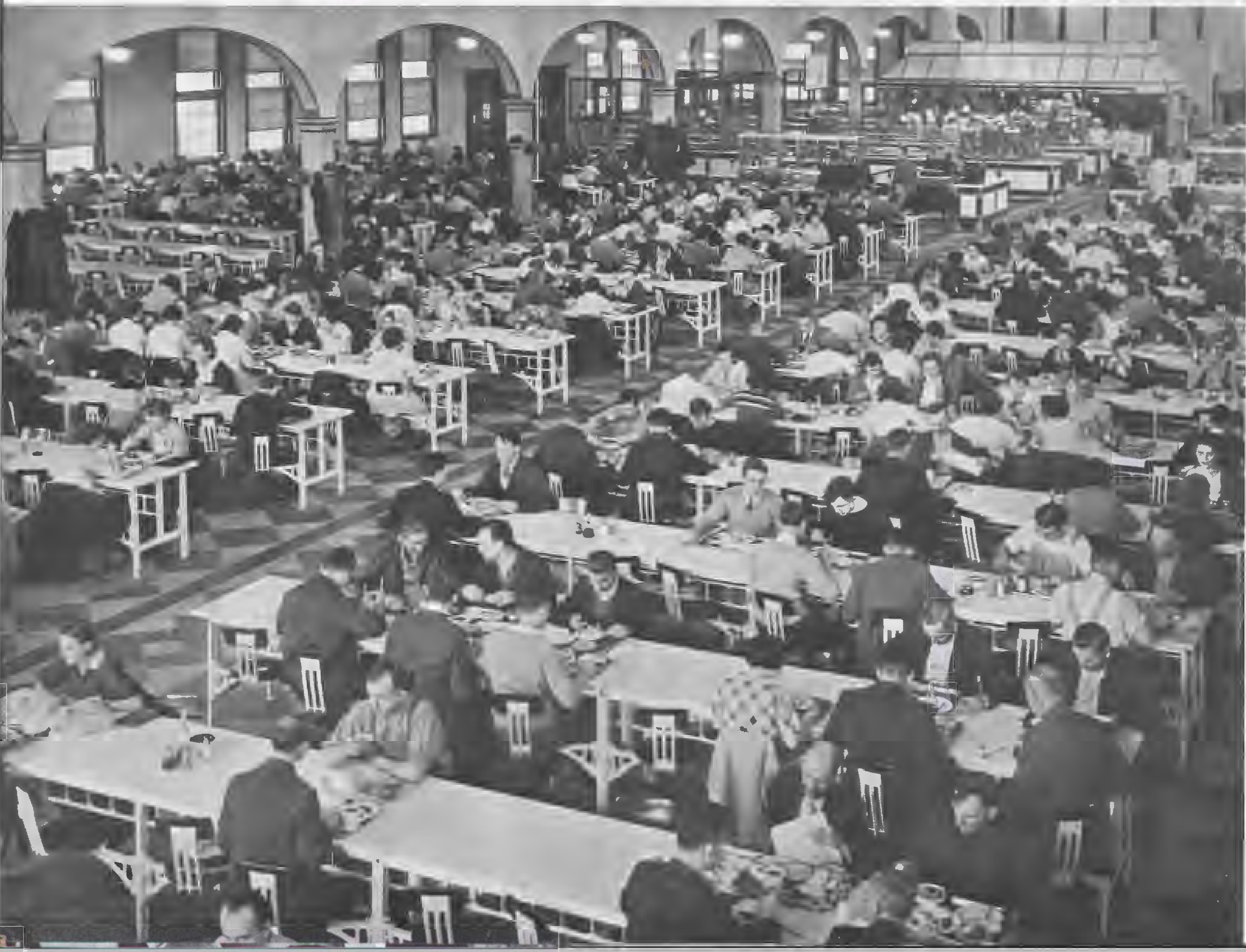
have been made available for use in the intervals between working hours.

To facilitate the parking of automobiles belonging to employees and to prevent congestion on nearby streets the Industries have provided a total of 1350 parking spaces, well distributed over the grounds.

A library, known as the Delta Library, offers several thousand well selected books pertaining to the mechanical and administrative problems of the Industries for the use of all employees. Employees are kept informed on matters of general interest to the Industries and on technical progress as well as the doings of their fellow workers by a monthly publication called "The Yarn Carrier."

These various services for the benefit of employees are carried on as daily routine with little to indicate the personal interest that was their beginning and that is still back of them. The organization of these services into departments extended to the entire personnel the friendly help first seen in occasional incidents. The well planned supervision of employee welfare that results, however, has not robbed the partners of personal contact with their employees. There is genuine sympathetic interest when unusual circumstances arise. This interest has simply become overshadowed by large-scale services. Not all of the high ideals relate to the quality of products, the efficiency of plants, the orderly care of grounds. More than ever, the partners cherish their close association with the "men who help."

Cafeteria service dates back to 1920. It had space in the factory buildings until 1925, when a new Cafeteria was erected. It has a great dining room that will seat 1200 employees



The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
The Farm Carrier
Vol. 3
Vol. 4

Happy moments are spent in the Recreation Building, erected in 1925

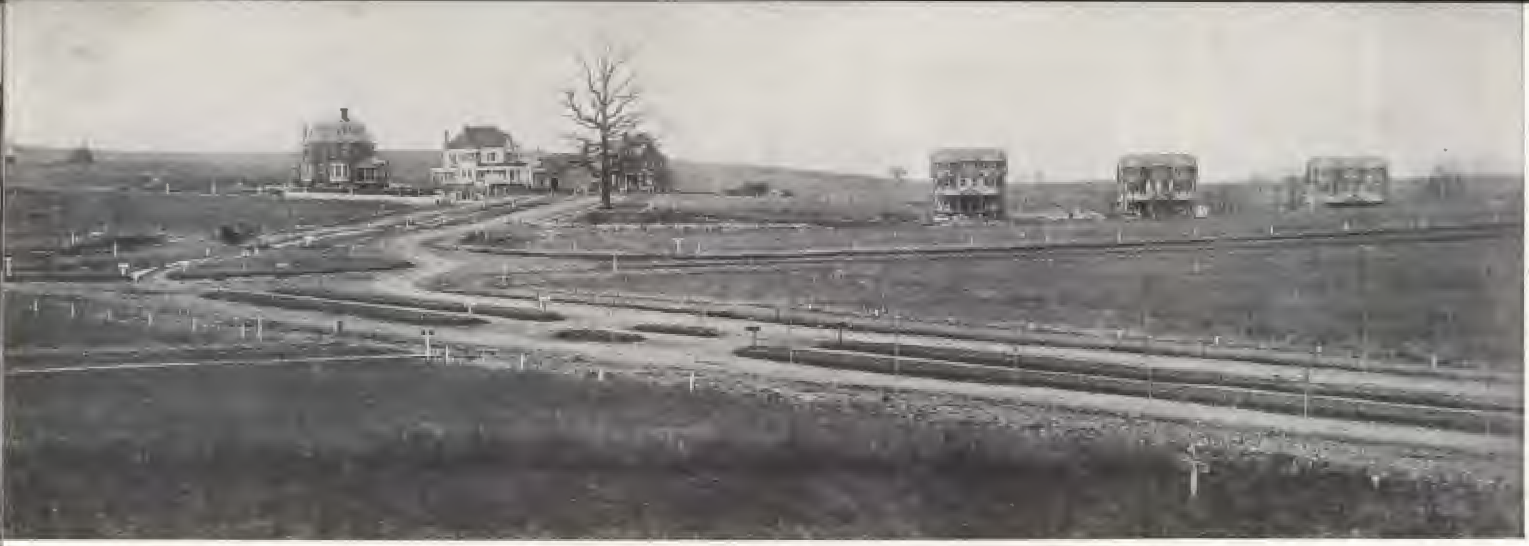
Wyomissing Creek

# CHAPTER 13

## WYOMISSING

While the two partners were pondering over the inadequacy of their Cedar Street plant in Reading, in late 1895 and 1896, it happened that a little group of men were similarly giving thought to the problem of a wholly different enterprise. These men had noted a natural expansion of the Reading area across the Schuylkill River to the southwest.

Between the Wyomissing Creek and the Lebanon Valley Branch of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad was a particularly promising stretch of country in line for further growth, and they planned to make it an attractive suburb. They laid out streets, planted trees, and built wooden sidewalks. The streets were unpaved, and evidence of human habitation was confined to a few scattered farm buildings. What was most needed was something that would stimulate the purchase of lots and the building of homes.



When Wyomissing was little more than a vision

Converting a farm into avenues

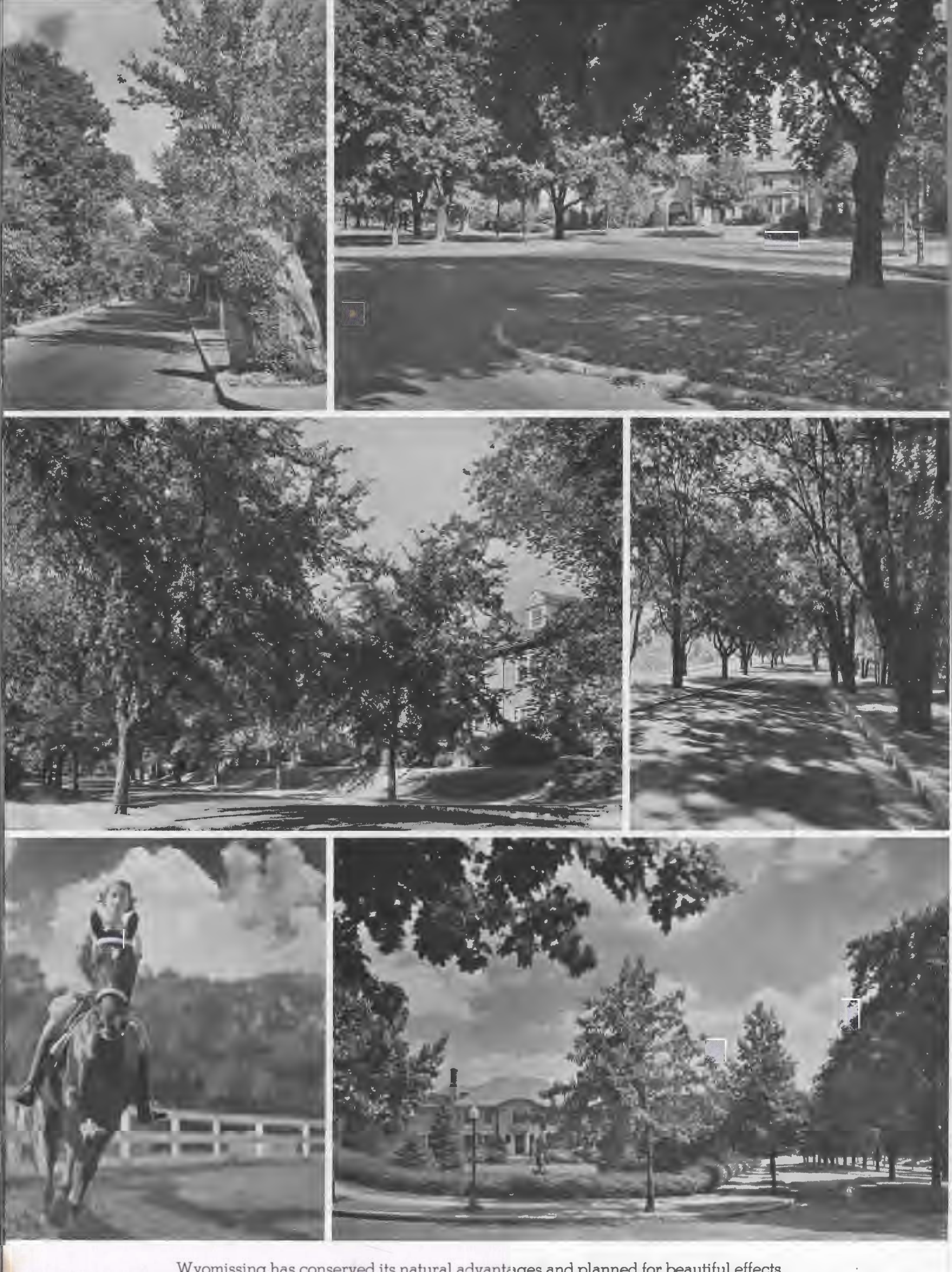
Wyomissing's development was sound

Public interest developed slowly until Fate brought together the two partners and the men back of this hopeful project. Would an attractive strip of land along the railroad induce the firm of Thun & Janssen to establish itself in Wyomissing? The consideration would be merely nominal—a dollar, in fact, for the promoters hoped the machine shop would be of some benefit to the community by its mere presence.

The partners listened attentively. Wyomissing seemed an inherently desirable location for their purpose. They accepted the offer, erected a suitable building, and moved into it.

For some years, the growth of the community was slow, but steady. It is apparent however, that the enterprise of the two partners played an important part in the town's early development, for about the time that the Berkshire Knitting Mills were in process of organization, Mr. Thun and Mr. Janssen called a town meeting to discuss the advisability of setting up a borough government. The meeting was well attended, and although the idea met with considerable opposition from many who feared that taxation would be necessary for paving and lighting, the proponents were well prepared to present their cause, and soon won over most of the doubters. The program was adopted, and the partners have served on the borough council ever since.

Eventually the Industries brought home-owners in numbers that far exceeded anything the land developers could have expected from a "machine



Wyomissing has conserved its natural advantages and planned for beautiful effects shop." More than that, the Industries and their founders brought to the borough a public-spirited interest that has had an equally important influence.

It is always difficult to say what might have been, but an effort to visualize Wyomissing without the Industries brings up a picture that suffers by comparison with the actuality. How much of Reading's population would have been brought westward in the direction of the borough? What weekly pay-rolls would have come into Wyomissing without the Industries? How rapidly could the community have provided the conveniences that are a present-day necessity?

What public-spirited citizens might have been found among the totally different population? What interests might have been promoted, and what might they have done for the public benefit?

Wyomissing today is a thriving suburb with beautiful homes, well kept streets, unusual civic features, and a rare charm.

From the time of its incorporation, there has been a fine spirit of self-help on the part of its citizens. They have provided parks, playgrounds and fine thoroughfares and have encouraged social and civic organizations. Matching these efforts, the partners and their employees have always aided in making the borough a fine suburb and in keeping it up to advanced civic standards.

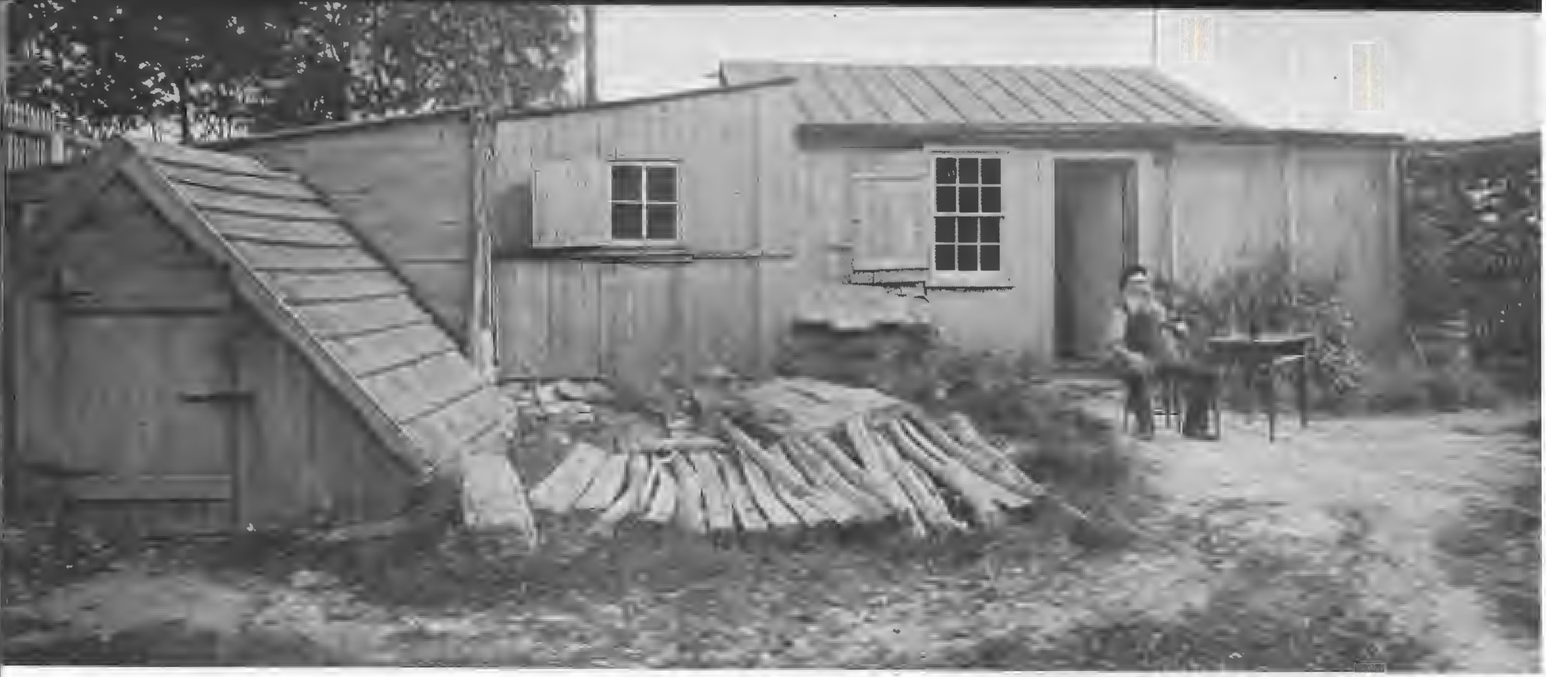
It would have been difficult to find a more favorable location for the Industries. It would have been impossible for Wyomissing to undergo such a transformation and to enjoy such prosperity without their help.

Sweeping curved avenues, inviting gates, driveways, and playgrounds

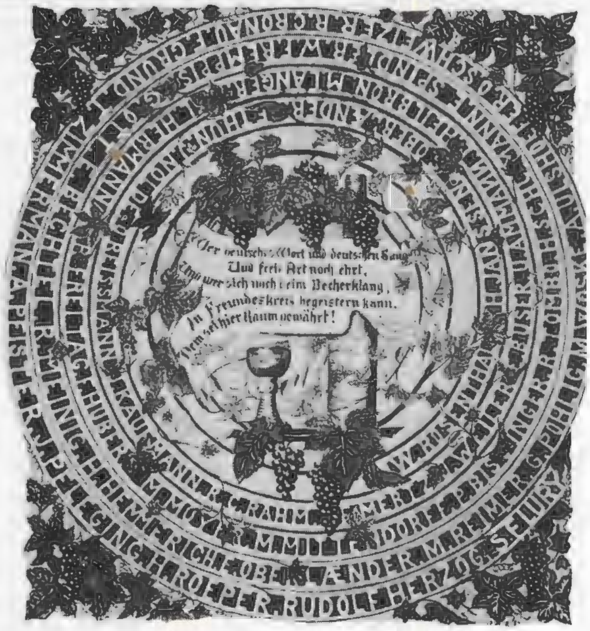
Sunny lawns and shrubbery, attractive modern schools, and unusual advantages for young people

Trees of all kinds in profusion, harmonious plantings everywhere

Good architecture in great variety; substantial construction

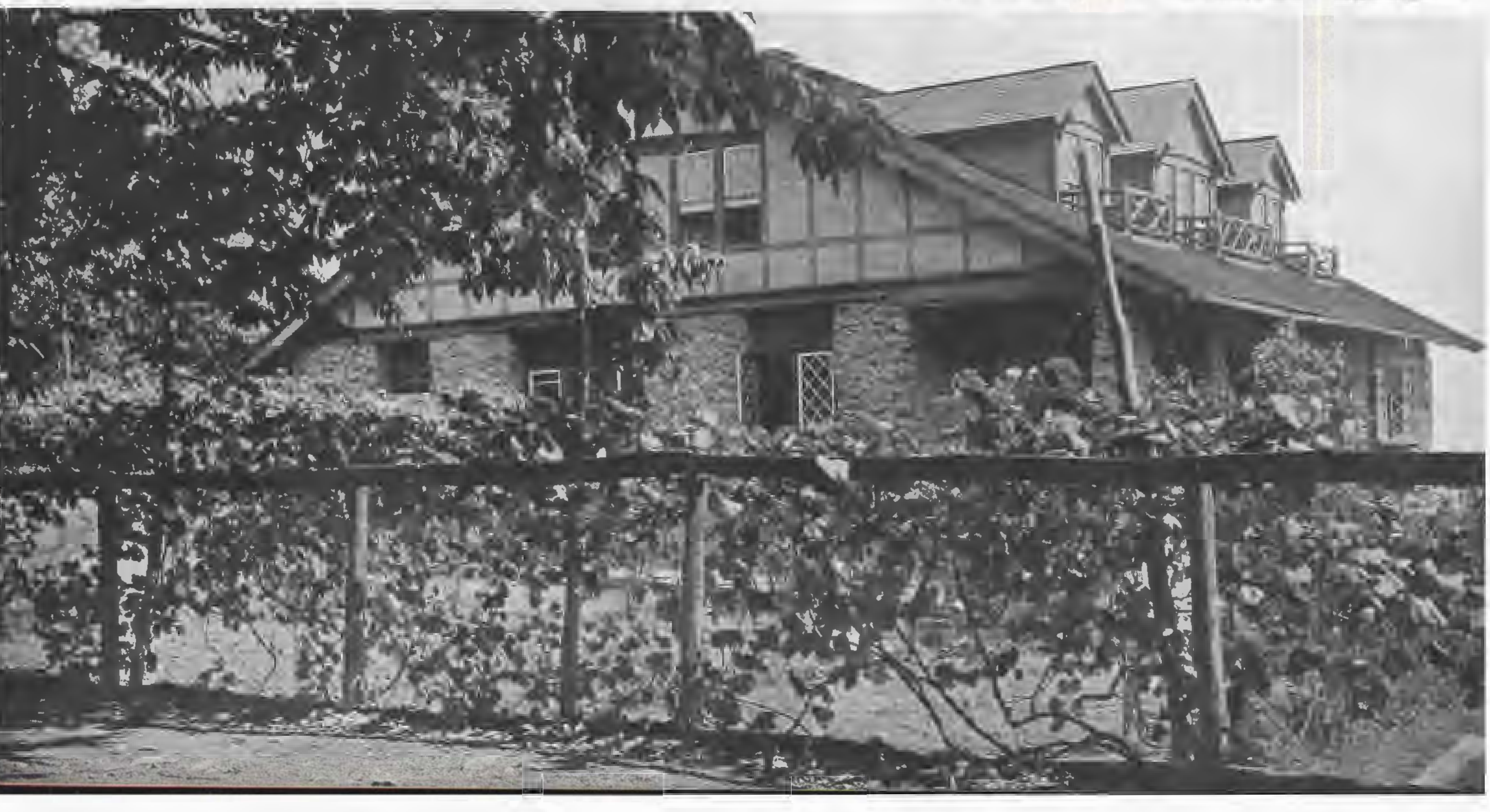


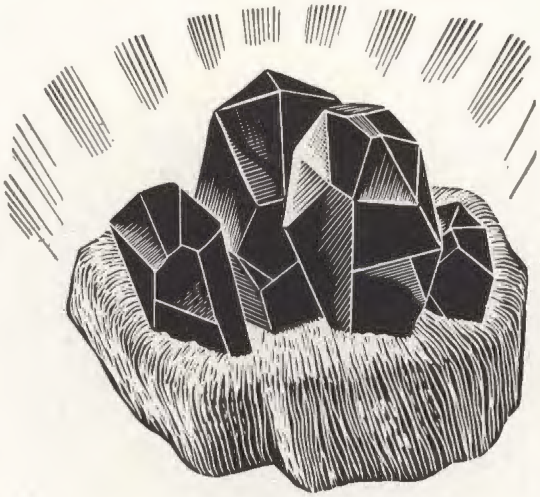
Kuechler's Roost, where the old Hermit entertained in "gemütlichkeit"


Wer deutsches Wort und deutschen Sang
Und treue Art noch ehrt,
Und wer sich noch beim Becherklang,
Im Freundeskreis begeistern kann,
Dem sei hier Raum gewährt!

Der Stammtisch

The new Kuechler's Roost, destroyed by fire in 1919





# CHAPTER 14

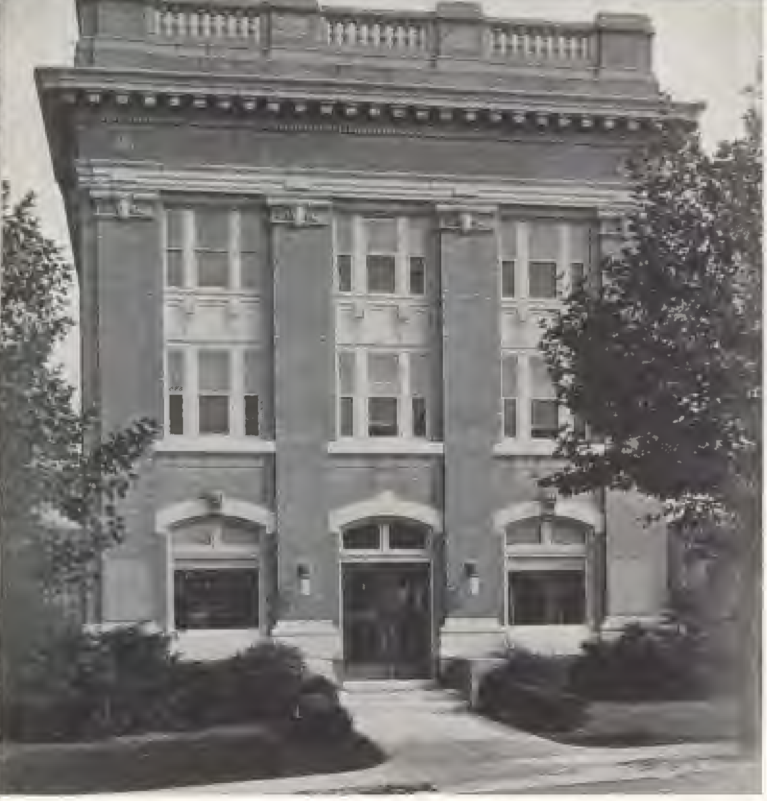
## MEN OF MANY INTERESTS

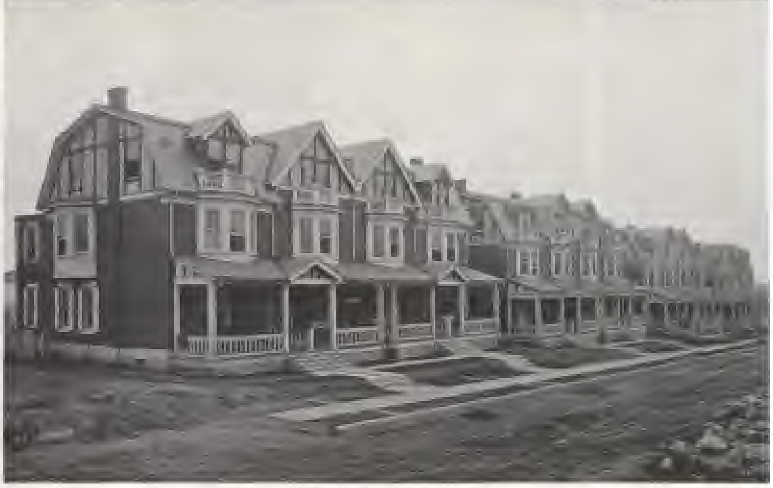
On almost any Saturday afternoon in the nineties, family groups might have been observed making their way up the friendly slopes of Mount Penn, to the east of Reading. Their destination was a snug spot that became known as Kuechler's Roost. There was prepared a veritable feast of friendship. The afternoon and evening included among its various features a gathering of the men around the famous Round Table in which all their names were carved. In the smoky atmosphere of this comfortable forum songs and stories mingled with discussions of whatever seemed of interest at the moment.

Among the group were the two partners who were building up a machine shop business, and with those two their wives and their lively growing children. Here the young manufacturers found recreation, as in their New York days, in that exchange of information and banter and hopes and ideals with

The Ontelaunee Orchards apply the most advanced principles of fruit culture

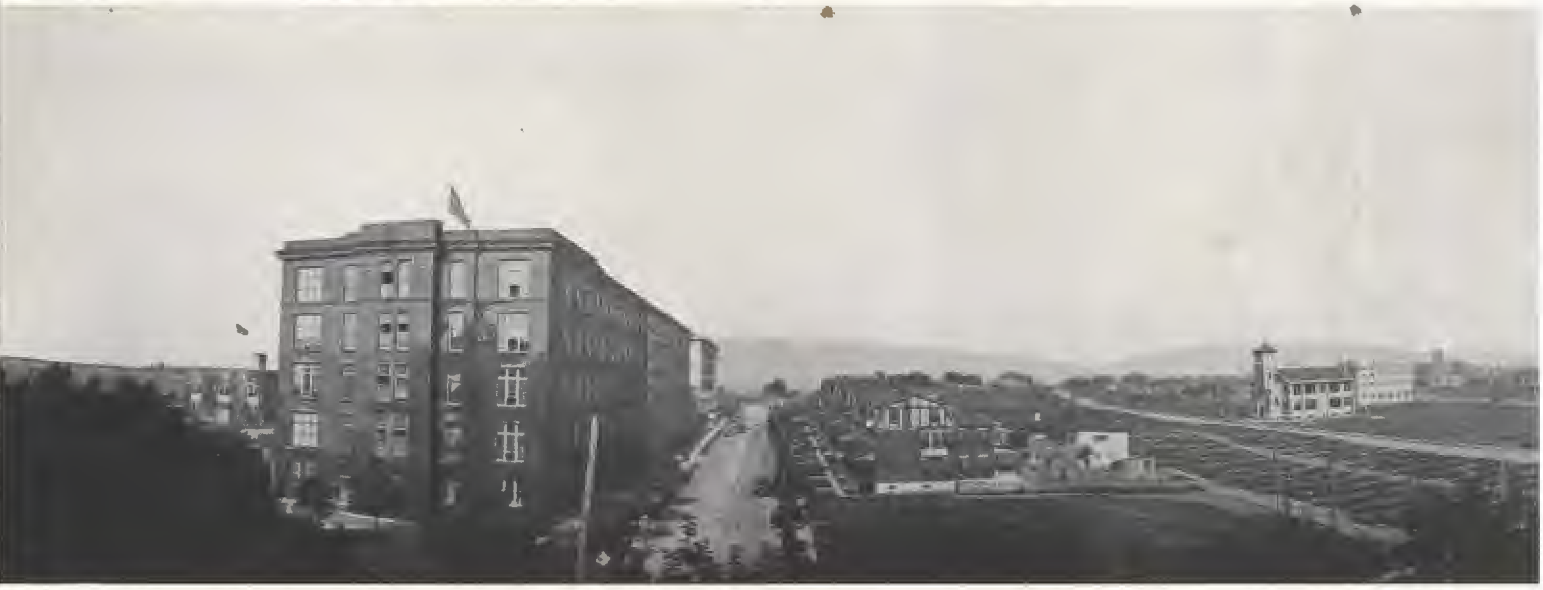
Modern farming on the combined Tulpehocken Farms



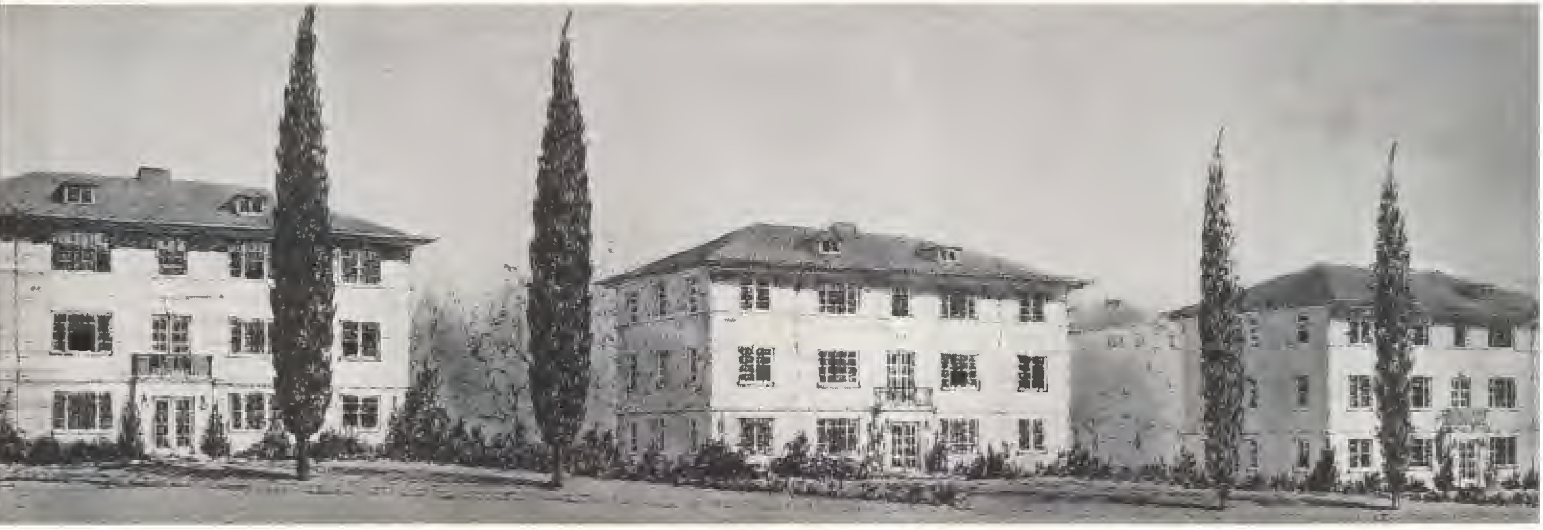


The first homes built by the Wyomissing Building and Saving Association

Office of the Delta Realty Corporation



These homes were later replaced by the Berkshire office and other buildings



The latest development: Delta homes

other young men that makes a well-rounded life possible. The time was spent to good advantage and with benefit to all who were in the group.

As time went on, the two developed simultaneously their happy and ideal family life. Each found in his home the staunch support needed in the early days and the companionship to enrich later years. The partners developed also their friendships, their hobbies, and their business interests. Both of them are fond of travel, and enjoy alike the pleasures of motoring and the opportunity to visit abroad. Both have a widely developed interest in trees, nature study and pastoral life, which is well exemplified in two of their hobbies. One of them has turned his attention in the direction of fruit culture, and the Ontelaunee Orchards are an example of what can be done with skilful handling of fruit trees on a large scale. The other has developed a natural fondness for scientific farming, and to indulge that interest he has studied farm after farm and considered their possibilities, acquiring those of greatest promise, until now he has a group of farms enjoying the advantage of management from a central directing headquarters, known collectively as the Tulpehocken Farms.

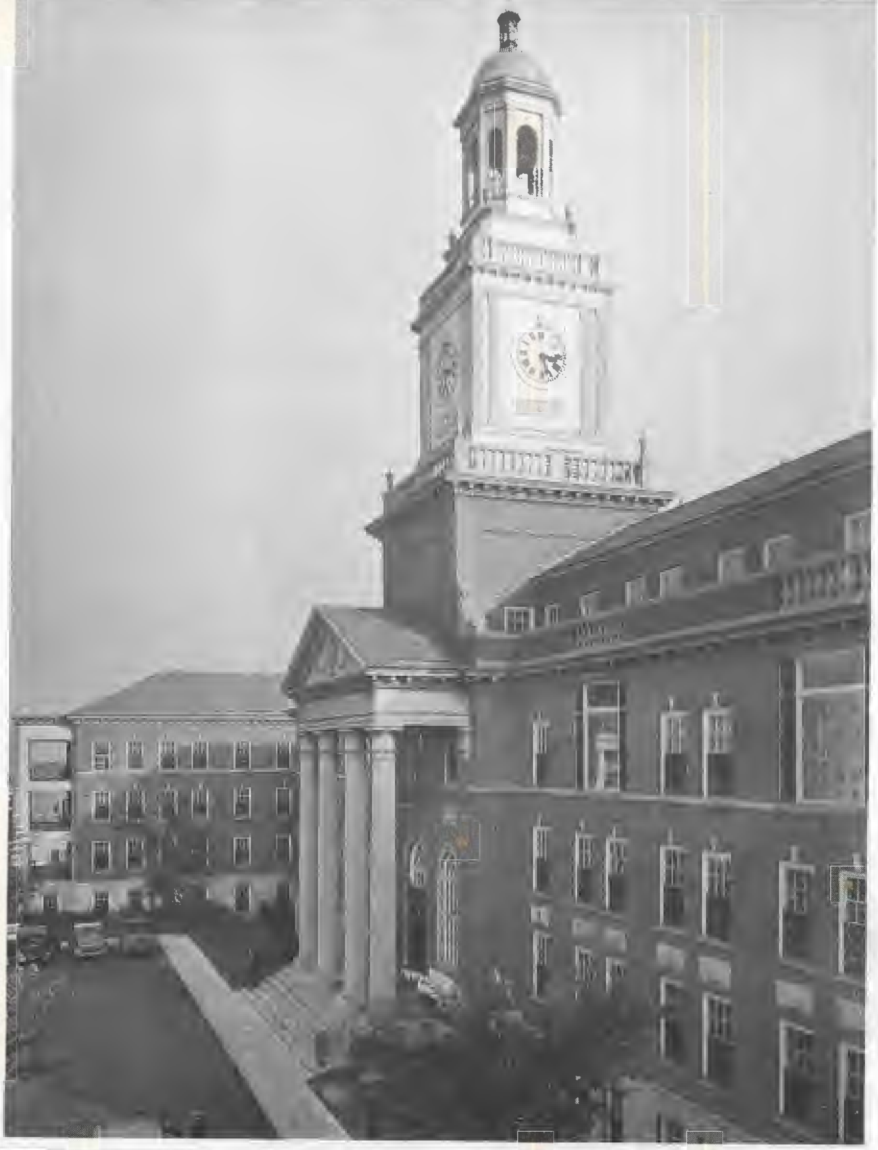
Not to allow their chief business interests to keep them out of touch with other affairs, they have participated in banking, land development, building operations, utilities, and manufacturing concerns. To mention only a few, there are the Wyomissing Valley Disposal Company, the Wyomissing Development Company, the Lehigh Structural Steel Company, the North Wyomissing

The Wyomissing Disposal Plant

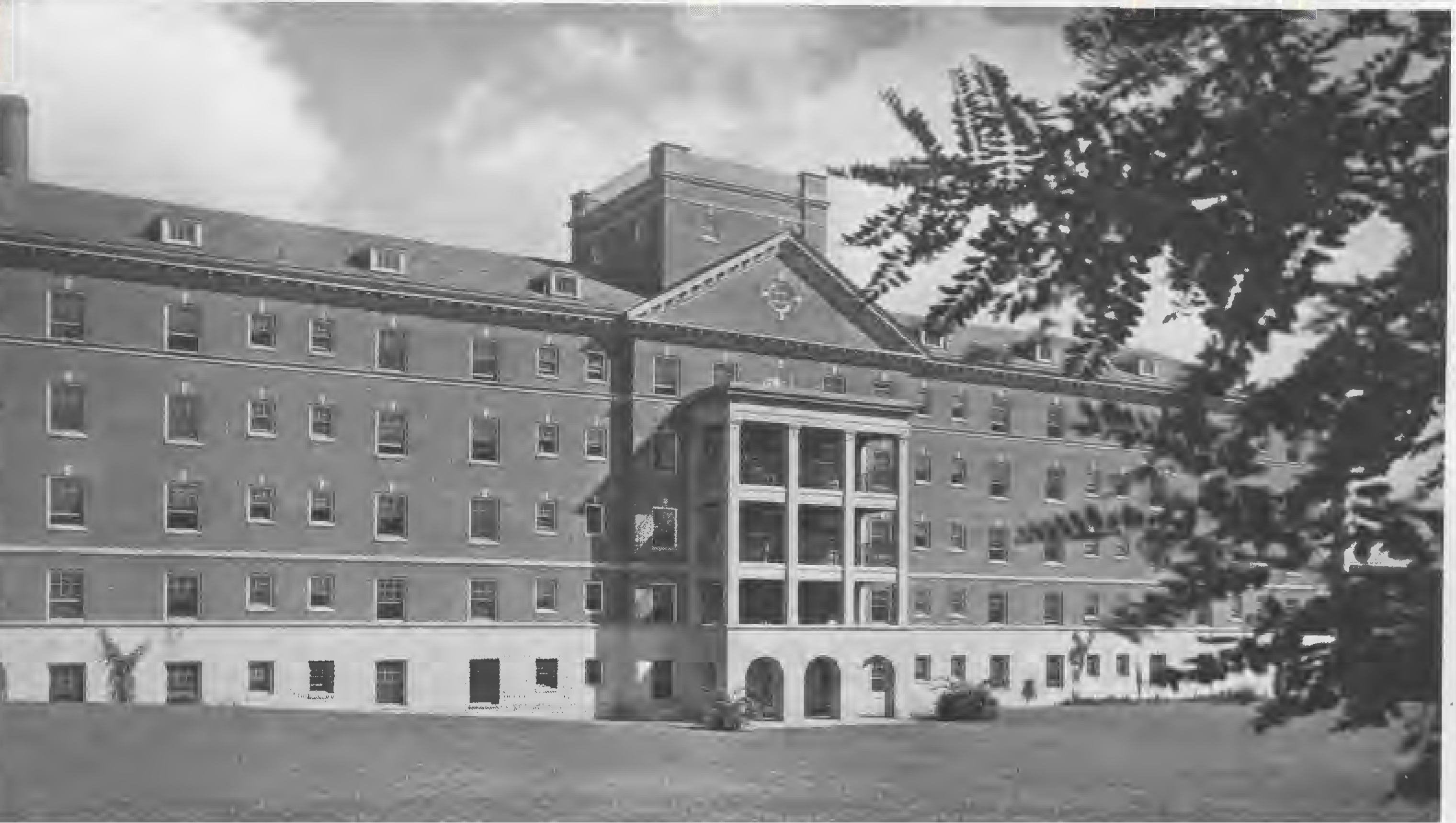
People's Trust Company

Heights Water Company, the People's Trust Company, the Union National Bank, and the Berks County Trust Company.

But no matter how far flung and complex their business affiliations became, the two partners never neglected to develop and maintain innumerable friendships and contacts outside of the world and atmosphere of big business. Their many-sided philanthropic activities reflect their Christian character as well as their belief in the recreative power which flows from human contacts and from sharing our neighbor's burden.



The graceful tower of the Reading Hospital may be seen from a long distance. The Nurses' Hall (below) is a fine feature of this well-equipped institution



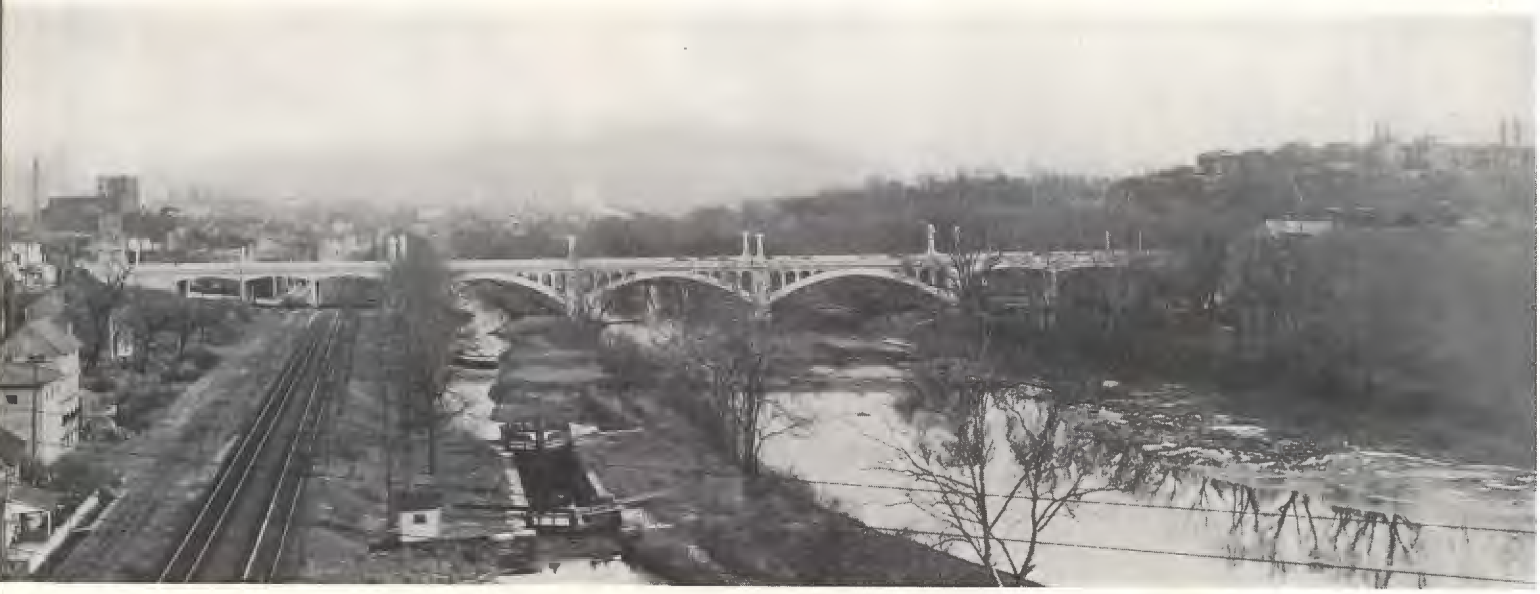
# CHAPTER 15

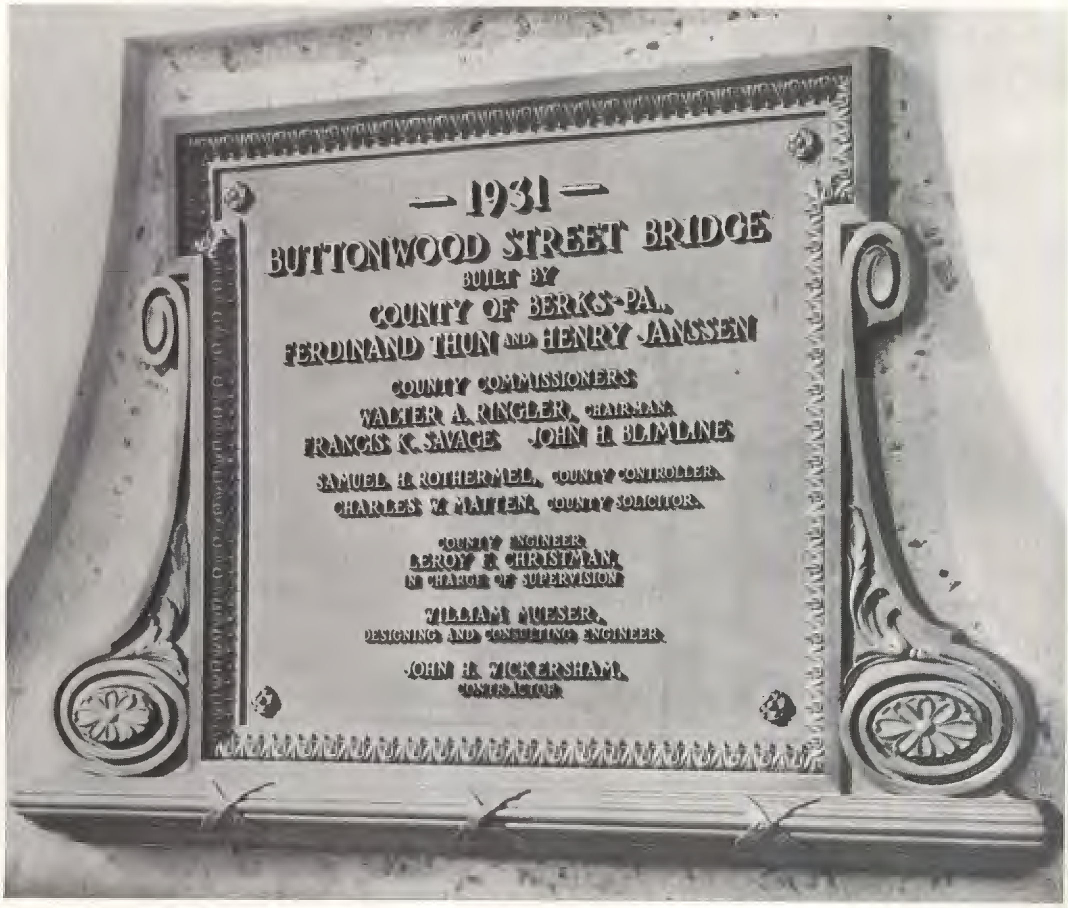
## PHILANTHROPIES

Just what the incident was would hardly be remembered now by either of the two partners, and it is equally improbable that they realized its significance at the time when it happened. Nevertheless, an item that appeared in the "day book" at an early date was the first written record of a sympathetic interest Thun and Janssen have always had for their fellow men. The entry stated simply, "Charity, 9 cents."

This contribution to a nameless recipient was a promise that has been fulfilled magnificently—a promise that the pressure of business should never crowd out things of the heart.

As time went on, the welfare of employees and then of Wyomissing became more and more a matter of sincere interest to the partners. Although outside causes have appealed successfully to their sympathies, the partners




— 1931 —
BUTTONWOOD STREET BRIDGE
BUILT BY
COUNTY OF BERKS-PA.
FERDINAND THUN AND HENRY JANSSEN
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:
WALTER A. RINGLER, CHAIRMAN.
FRANCIS K. SAVAGE. JOHN H. BLIMLINE.
SAMUEL H. ROTHERMEL, COUNTY CONTROLLER.
CHARLES W. MATTEN, COUNTY SOLICITOR.
COUNTY ENGINEER
LEROY F. CHRISTMAN,
IN CHARGE OF SUPERVISION
WILLIAM MUESER,
DESIGNING AND CONSULTING ENGINEER.
JOHN H. WICKERSHAM,
CONTRACTOR.

The Buttonwood Street Bridge is of great benefit to the City of Reading, the Borough of Wyomissing, and thousands of families on both sides of the river have always favored their own employees, their fellow townsmen and the interests of Reading and Berks Counties before any other group which may have enjoyed their benevolence.

Their gifts to worthy purposes in recent years include close to half a hundred causes that have benefited by amounts ranging individually from a thousand dollars to far over a million, not counting innumerable small charities which have found a sympathetic ear and a response in proportion to their worthiness. Each of the two partners contributes separately to charities in which he has a specific interest, but many other gifts are made jointly.

If these beneficences are considered by groups, the largest would include public charities and welfare work, and within that group the Reading Hospital and the Welfare Federation of Reading and Berks County have been outstanding examples.

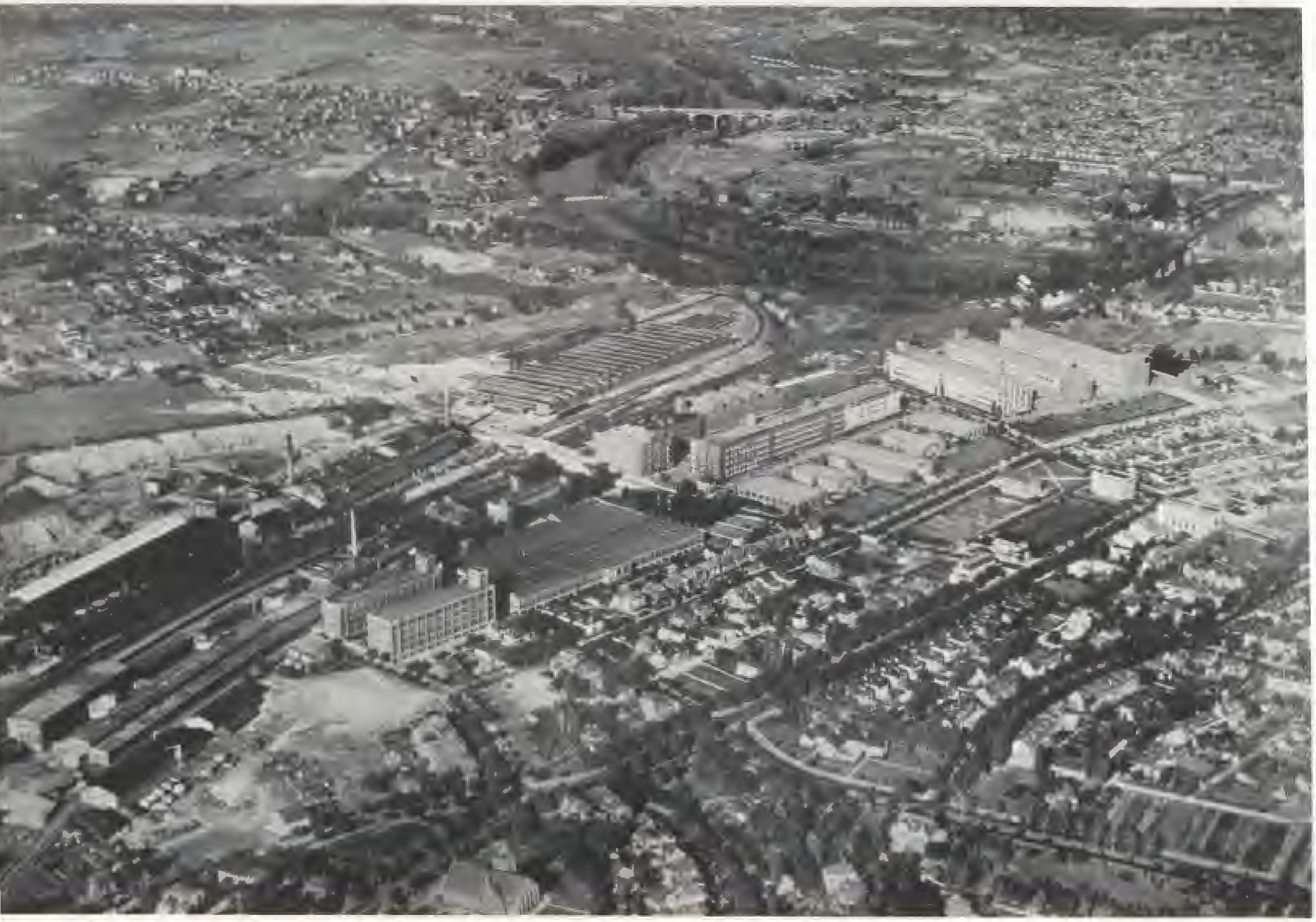
Various educational, religious and general scientific causes have received a long list of contributions, led by the Reading Museum and Art Gallery and the Wyomissing Public Library. St. John's German Lutheran Church in Reading also, to which both men and their families adhere, has always enjoyed their support.

A third group, Civic Institutions, have received much attention from the partners, with such needs as the Buttonwood Street Bridge and major improvements in the Borough of Wyomissing standing out prominently.

The Wyomissing Library; a beautiful building with a charming background

The Reading Museum and Art Gallery provides a wealth of material for study and cultural development

Men of the sterling qualities of Thun and Janssen never forget the moral debt which a true man owes to the country of his birth. Many a suffering soul in the good old city of Barmen thanks Thun and Janssen for quietly administered help and brotherly sympathy. When the American Society of Friends after the World War undertook the feeding of starving children in Germany, the "gentlemen of Wyomissing" could always be counted among the many supporters of this noble cause, which resulted in the creation of a great many individual friendships between American and German people and in the development of closer cultural relations between the two nations. In order to supply a permanent vehicle for the preservation and further promotion of these feelings, Thun and Janssen, supported by a group of like-minded people, established in 1930 the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation with headquarters in Philadelphia. This organization, named in honor of a most prominent German among the nation-builders of America, has been highly successful in cementing international confidence at a period when coöperation and understanding among nations has been distressingly lacking.



The Wyomissing Industries in 1936

## CHAPTER 16

## THE FUTURE

What of the future? What may be envisioned for the Industries which have grown so rapidly since 1892?

The influence of costume on morals—and vice versa—contributed to the very start and made itself felt in every move of the growing businesses. Vagaries of fashion, arising out of the news of the moment, continue to be swayed more and more by trends in living and thinking.

Where an earlier generation frowned on the few venturesome feminine spectators at public events, now an army of feminine participants seem quite natural in athletic games. This change is part of Wyomissing's past and present. It must be a part of the future. The pioneering which opened up the Cherokee strip in 1893 and encouraged the growth of new markets for goods is replaced by a pioneering in the laboratory where new materials are born.

The United States drew Thun and Janssen from their native land; opportunities not yet dreamed of are taking other intrepid spirits from this country to little known parts of the world.

These changes lay open to the Industries a succession of opportunities—new mechanical needs, new uses for narrow fabrics, new applications of knitting principles. It is for the thousands of interested men and women of the Industries, led by the two partners, to determine what is to be.

Some hint of the future can be found in the ideals on which the institutions have been built, in the far-seeing leadership, in the alertness and thoroughness of the personnel; in short, in the spirit of the Wyomissing Industries. These are indestructible because they exist not as material things, but in the hearts of those who spend their productive hours within the Industries' walls.

But regardless of the course of the Industries, their founders have endowed the future with a heritage far more precious. When the two young men from Barmen met and pledged their mutual friendship and loyalty, they decided the destinies of many people. What achievements will be inspired by the story of these two lives? What accomplishments will result from the application of their thoughtful gifts?

To them is already being erected a monument—a monument that is imperishable because it is made, not of metals and stone, but of lives—the lives of fellow men in which may be seen the inspiring influence of the Two Partners.